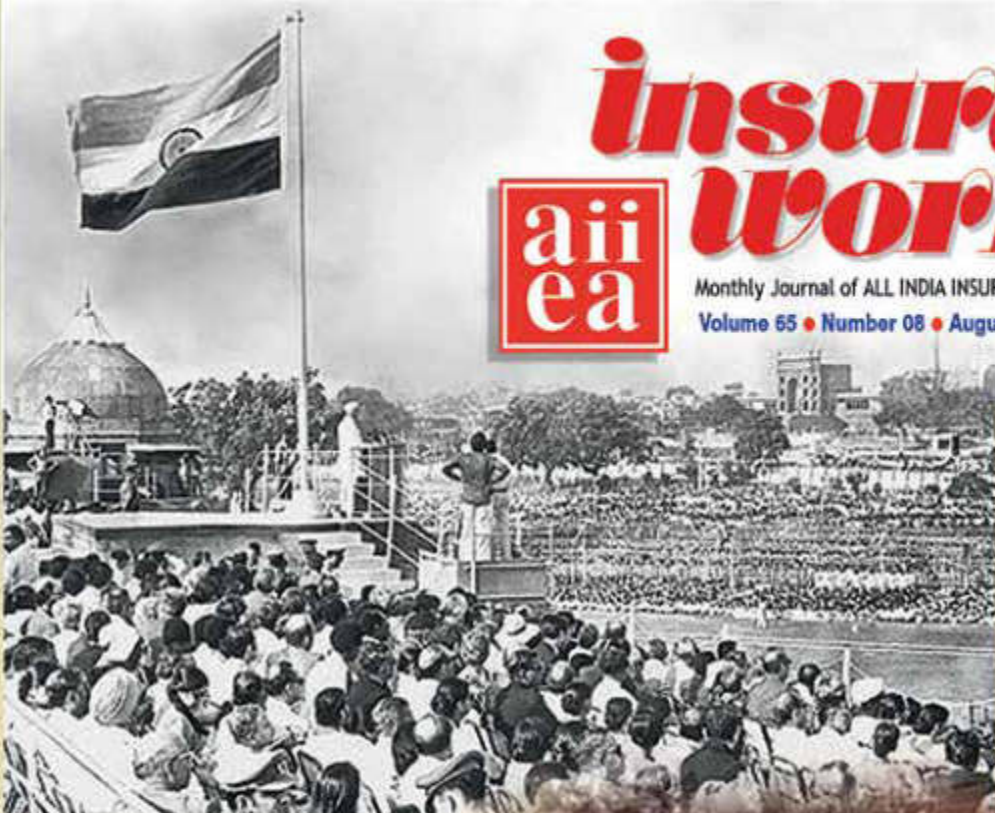


insurance Worker



Monthly Journal of ALL INDIA INSURANCE EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION
Volume 65 • Number 08 • August 2022 • ₹ 10 • Pages 40+4



THE JOURNEY
THAT BEGAN

75 YEARS AGO



INDIA AT
SEVENTY-FIVE
A Mixed Record



IDEA of INDIA
Vision of Equal, Just
and Fair Society



DIVERSITY, FEDERALISM
& the REPUBLIC



A TRYST
WITH
DESTINY

We rededicate ourselves to the noble values
of the National Liberation Movement

**& Reclaim the Freedoms
and Republican values**

which are attempted to be taken away



WORKING of
THE CONSTITUTION



WORKING CLASS
in the Freedom Struggle



आजादी के
75 वर्ष



With Best Compliments

LIC EMPLOYEES UNION, ERNAKULAM DIVISION

WE EXTEND OUR WARMEST GREETINGS
TO ALL OUR FELLOW CITIZENS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE



75TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE

We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy. What does social democracy mean? It means a way of life which recognises liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. These principles are not to be treated as separate items in a trinity. They form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy.....

- Dr. B R Ambedkar
25th November 1949



75th Anniversary of Independence



In this Issue

- 5 INDIA AT SEVENTY-FIVE
A Mixed Record of
Achievements and Failures
Amanulla Khan
- 8 A Trust With Destiny
Jawaharlal Nehru
- 10 IDEA of INDIA
Vision of Equal, Just and Fair Society
Sitaram Yechury
- 15 DIVERSITY, FEDERALISM
and the REPUBLIC
Reflections on the Present
Condition of India
G. N. Devy
- 25 आजादी के 75 वर्ष
आशाएं और निराशाएं
- रामजी तिवारी
- 27 WORKING of THE CONSTITUTION
and The Challenges Ahead
Justice (Rd) Nagamohan Das
- 32 WORKERS and the WORKING
CLASS in the Freedom Struggle
Reflections from the
Contemporary Context
Indu Agnihotri

The AIIEA has decided to celebrate the 75th Year of Independence in a befitting manner. It has advised all its units to hold cultural and educative programs on 15th August to mark the historical event. It is organizing a National Seminar at Hyderabad on 6-7 August with some of the finest intellectuals giving their opinion on issues concerning the nation as it celebrates the 75th Year of its independence. The entire idea is to take a look at the past to understand the present and work for the future that we desire.

As the country celebrates the 75th Year of Independence, it is confronted with multiple challenges. The last 30 years of neoliberal economic policies have been a great disaster. This period saw unprecedented concentration of wealth in the hands of the top 1% of the population while the bottom half continue to live in abject poverty and humiliating conditions. The country today is staring at unemployment crisis of gigantic proportions and there is drastic fall in foreign exchange reserves with the depreciation of rupee as against the dollar. Since 2014, the rupee has lost its value by more than 25%. The inflation has reached an all time high. The country is also witnessing massive infringements of the citizens' fundamental rights. The country in the recent times has seen unprecedented religious polarization. There are efforts to undermine the rich diversity in order to bring about uniformity and homogeneity. This will inflame conflicts and will have disastrous consequences for unity of the nation.

These are issues which must be seriously analysed for charting out a path for the future; for construction of an equal, just and fair society. In this issue, we have published some illuminating articles on the present challenges. We hope they will be of immense value in our struggles. We express our gratitude to the contributors of these articles.

The AIIEA and Insurance Worker extend their revolutionary greetings to insurance employees and all fellow-citizens on the occasion of India completing 75 years of its independence. While celebrating the 75th Year, we should also take note of the challenges to our Republic. We need to rededicate ourselves to the noble values of the national liberation movement and reclaim the freedoms and republican values which are attempted to be taken away today by the ruling regime.

Cover Design & Lay-out :
M.Ramu, Kriya Prakashana

No.1, 1st Cross, CSI Compound,
Bengaluru-560027
Ph.: 080-48529910
e-mail :
insuranceworker1957@gmail.com
iw_2005@yahoo.com
Subscription
Annual : Rs. 120
Single Copy : Rs. 10

Settle Wage Revision in PSGI Industry immediately

The wage revision in Public Sector General Insurance Industry fell due on 1st August 2017. The AIIEA submitted the charter for wage revision and improvement in service conditions to the Chairman of GIPSA on 2nd August 2017 itself. The charter was prepared taking into consideration the strength of the institutions and the aspirations of the employees. The demands raised were reasonable. Unfortunately these legitimate demands are not considered even after 5 years. This has not only created avoidable industrial unrest but has also demoralized the workforce at a time when they have to be motivated to meet the challenges of a difficult economic environment and intense competition.

The workforce of PSGI Industry has clearly been betrayed both by the administration and the government. While submitting the Charter, we had explained the rationale of our demands to the GIPSA Chairman. We explained that the Public Sector General Insurance companies have shown a phenomenal growth and have outperformed their competitors in the private sector during the five year period between 2012 and 2017. The four PSGI companies created a new record in the financial year 2016-17 by mobilizing a gross domestic premium income (GDPI) of Rs 59698.11 cr. with a growth rate of 25.18%. The average growth of the PSGI companies for the years 2012-13 to 2016-17 was 14.46%. This excellent performance has opened up newer avenues for further growth of the industry. We argued that since the workforce has created enormous wealth and prosperity for the industry in these five years, they have a legitimate right to demand a share of this prosperity. The GIPSA Chairman had expressed full agreement with our reasoning and had assured that all efforts would be made to settle the demands of the employees at the earliest. This assurance has not been kept up. If this is not betrayal, what else can it be?

The preliminary talks on wage revision commenced on April 4, 2019. During these talks the officials of GIPSA as well as the CMDs of all companies assured that industry is capable of meeting the legitimate demands of the employees and serious discussions on wage

revision would commence immediately after the completion of the 2019 General Elections. When pointed out that despite the coming into force of model code, the LIC had begun the process of wage revision with an offer of 10% hike, the Chairman of GIPSA gave an assurance that this time too, there would be parity with LIC in wage revision and requested the workforce through the participating unions to assure employees of a good and early wage revision. But this again was an assurance that was not kept up.

The AIIEA is of the firm understanding that in a class divided society, the most difficult struggle of the workers would be on the demand for wage increase. Aware of the limitations of its own strength, it took efforts to bring about a total unity of employees and officers in the industry on the issue of wage revision. The Joint Forum has conducted an unprecedented number of protests and strike actions in the last two years. These programs have received massive and enthusiastic response from all sections of the employees and officers. These programs were necessary to break the policy of denial adopted by both the PSGI industry administration and the government. The GIPSA started singing a new song. From the earlier position that industry has the capacity to meet the wage demand, GIPSA started saying that the financial position of the industry is not comfortable to take the load of wage increase.

We do not agree with these arguments of GIPSA and the government. Even if there is some fall in the profitability of the industry, the question is who is responsible for such a situation? Surely the workforce cannot be

Dear Subscribers,

Due to space constraint in this Independence Day special issue, we could not accommodate news of various activities of our units during last one month, as also our regular columns. These will be included in the next issue.

EDITOR

faulted and punished over this. The fault clearly lies on the government for creating lot of uncertainty and flip-flopp on the policy of merger after taking the process forward spending huge amounts as fee to the consultants. The government decision on privatization of this successful industry has also created uncertainties. The top managements of these companies are equally responsible for their failure to devise ways and means and taking of pro-active initiatives to meet the challenges of the competitive environment.

The PSGI employees and officers deserve a good wage revision for having made immense contribution to the progress of the companies with higher productivity and devoted services. Therefore, the offer made to them of 7% increase in wage after nearly five years of wage revision having fallen due is an insult to the movement of the general insurance employees. The Unions have rightly rejected this paltry offer and have demanded parity with LIC which is a historical truth. The massive participation of the workforce in the one day strike on 15th

July 2022 is an indicator of their resolve to take the fight forward, however difficult it may be. The JFTU has decided on a series of protest actions and strikes to force the GIPSA and government to concede what rightfully belongs to the employees.

The battle has to be joined with determination and courage of conviction. It must be taken into account that country presently is being ruled by the most reactionary neoliberal regime. This government is totally hostile to the interests of the working class. It is moving ahead not only to privatise the public enterprises but also bring an end to the permanency of employment as can be seen from the scheme of Agnipath devised for recruitment to the armed forces. The intension is to save cost. The AIIEA always believes that struggle for wage revision is a serious conflict between the interests of the employer and the employee. Whatever may be the odds of the present struggle, this battle has to be won. With this understanding the workforce of PSGI companies must join the battle with the firm belief that struggles always pay. □

आजादी के 75[ं] साल



एआईआईईए ने स्वतन्त्रता के 75 वें वर्ष को उचित तरीके से मनाने का निर्णय लिया है। इसने अपनी सभी इकाइयों को इस ऐतिहासिक घटना को यादगार बनाने के लिए 15 अगस्त को सांस्कृतिक और शिक्षाप्रद कार्यक्रम आयोजित करने की सलाह दी है। यह 6-7 अगस्त को आजादी के 75वें वर्ष का जश्न मनाते हुए हैदराबाद में एक राष्ट्रीय संगोष्ठी का आयोजन कर रहा है जिसमें कुछ बेहतरीन बुद्धिजीवी राष्ट्र से सम्बन्धित मुद्दों पर अपनी राय देंगे। इस तरह के कार्यक्रम के पीछे सम्पूर्ण विचार, वर्तमान को समझने व भविष्य में जो करना चाहते हैं उसके लिए अतीत पर एक नजर डालना है।

जब देश स्वतन्त्रता के 75 वें वर्ष का जश्न मना रहा है, वह कई चुनौतियों का सामना कर रहा है। पिछले 30 वर्षों की नवउदारवादी आर्थिक नीतियां एक बड़ी आपदा रही हैं। इस अवधि में आबादी के शीर्ष 1 प्रतिशत के हाथों में धन का अभूतपूर्व संकेद्रण देखा गया, जबकि नीचे का आधा हिस्सा घोर गरीबी और अपमानजनक परिस्थितियों में रहना जारी रखे हुए है। देश आज बड़े पैमाने पर बेरोजगारी के संकट से जूझ रहा है और डॉलर के मुकाबले रूपये के मूल्यहास के साथ विदेशी मुद्रा भण्डार में भारी गिरावट आई है। 2014 के बाद से रूपये में 25 फीसदी से ज्यादा की गिरावट आई है। महंगाई अब तक के उच्चतम स्तर पर पहुंच गई है। देश में नागरिकों के मौलिक अधिकारों का बड़े पैमाने पर उल्लंघन भी हो रहा है। देश ने हाल के दिनों में अभूतपूर्व धार्मिक ध्रुवीकरण देखा है। एकरूपता और समरूपता लाने के लिये समृद्ध विविधता को कम करने के प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं। यह संघर्षों को भड़काएगा और राष्ट्र की एकता के लिए विनाशकारी परिणाम होंगे।

ये ऐसे मुद्दे हैं जिनका एक समान, न्यायपूर्ण और निष्पक्ष समाज के निर्माण हेतु भविष्य में एक रास्ता निकालने के लिए गम्भीरता से विश्लेषण किया जाना चाहिए। इस अंक में हमने वर्तमान चुनौतियों पर कुछ प्रबुद्ध लेख प्रकाशित किए हैं। हमें उम्मीद है कि संघर्ष में उनका बहुत महत्व होगा। हम इन लेखों के योगदानकर्ताओं के प्रति आभार व्यक्त करते हैं।

एआईआईईए और इन्श्योरेंस वर्कर भारत की स्वतन्त्रता के 75 वर्ष पूरे करने के अवसर पर बीमा कर्मचारियों और सभी साथी नागरिकों को क्रांतिकारी बधाई देते हैं। 75वां वर्ष मनाते हुए हमें अपने गणतन्त्र के समक्ष चुनौतियों का भी ध्यान रखना चाहिए। हमें राष्ट्रीय मुक्ति आन्दोलन के महान मूल्यों के लिए खुद को फिर से समर्पित करने और स्वतन्त्रता और गणतंत्रात्मक मूल्यों को पुनः प्राप्त करने की आवश्यकता है जिन्हें आज सत्तारूढ़ शासन द्वारा छीनने का प्रयास किया जा रहा है।

साधारण बीमा उद्योग में वेतन संशोधन तत्काल तय करो

सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के सामान्य बीमा उद्योग में वेतन संशोधन 1 अगस्त 2017 को देय हो गया था। एआईआईईए ने 2 अगस्त 2017 को ही जिप्सा के अध्यक्ष को वेतन संशोधन और सेवा शर्तों में सुधार के लिए चार्टर प्रस्तुत कर दिया था। चार्टर को संस्थानों की ताकत और कर्मचारियों की आकांक्षाओं को ध्यान में रखते हुए तैयार किया गया था। उठाई गई मांगों वाजिब थीं। दुर्भाग्य से इन जायज मांगों पर 5 साल बाद भी विचार नहीं किया गया है। इसने न केवल ऐसी औद्योगिक अशांति पैदा की है जिसे टाला जा सकता था, बल्कि ऐसे समय में कार्यबल का मनोबल भी गिराया है जब उन्हें एक कठिन आर्थिक वातावरण और तीव्र प्रतिस्पर्धा की चुनौतियों का सामना करने के लिए प्रेरित किए जाने की जरूरत है।

पीएसजीआई उद्योग के कार्यबल के साथ प्रशासन और सरकार दोनों ने स्पष्ट रूप से विश्वासघात किया है। चार्टर जमा करते समय हमने जिप्सा के अध्यक्ष को अपनी मांगों के औचित्य के बारे में बताया था। हमने बताया कि सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र की साधारण बीमा कम्पनियों ने 2012 और 2017 के बीच पांच साल की अवधि के दौरान एक अभूतपूर्व वृद्धि दिखाई है और निजी क्षेत्र में अपने प्रतिस्पर्धियों से बेहतर प्रदर्शन किया है। चार पीएसजीआई कम्पनियों ने वित्तीय वर्ष 2016-17 में 25.18 प्रतिशत की वृद्धि दर के साथ 59698.11 करोड़ रुपये की सकल घरेलू प्रीमियम आय (जीडीपीआई) जुटाकर एक नया रिकार्ड बनाया। वर्ष 2012-13 से 2016-17 तक पीएसजीआई कम्पनियों की औसत वृद्धि 14.46 प्रतिशत थी। इस उत्कृष्ट प्रदर्शन ने उद्योग के आगे विकास के लिए नए रास्ते खोल दिए हैं। हमने तर्क दिया कि चूंकि इन पांच वर्षों में कार्यबल ने उद्योग के लिए बहुत अधिक धन और समृद्धि पैदा की है, इसलिए उन्हें इस समृद्धि के हिस्से की मांग करने का वैध अधिकार है। जिप्सा के अध्यक्ष ने हमारे तर्क से पूर्ण सहमति व्यक्त की थी और आश्वासन दिया था कि कर्मचारियों की मांगों को जल्द से जल्द निपटाने के लिए सभी प्रयास किए जाएंगे। इस आश्वासन को बरकरार नहीं रखा गया है। इसे विश्वासघात नहीं तो और क्या कहा जाना चाहिए? वेतन संशोधन पर प्रारम्भिक वार्ता 4 अप्रैल, 2019 को शुरू हुई थी। इन वार्ताओं के दौरान जिप्सा के अधिकारियों के साथ-साथ सभी कम्पनियों के सीएमडी ने आश्वासन दिया कि उद्योग कर्मचारियों की वैध मांगों को पूरा करने में सक्षम है और 2019 के आम चुनाव के पूरा होने के बाद वेतन संशोधन पर गम्भीर चर्चा तुरन्त शुरू होगी। जब यह बताया गया कि मॉडल कोड के लागू होने के बावजूद, एलआईसी ने 10 प्रतिशत वृद्धि की पेशकश के साथ वेतन संशोधन की प्रक्रिया शुरू कर दी है, तो जिप्सा के अध्यक्ष ने आश्वासन दिया कि इस बार भी वेतन संशोधन में एलआईसी के साथ समानता होगी और भाग लेने वाली यूनियनों से अनुरोध किया कि वे अपने माध्यम से कर्मचारियों को एक अच्छे और शीघ्र वेतन संशोधन का आश्वासन दें। लेकिन यह फिर से एक आश्वासन था जिसे रखा नहीं गया।

एआईआईईए का यह पक्का मानना है कि वर्ग विभाजित समाज में मजदूरों का सबसे कठिन संघर्ष वेतन वृद्धि की मांग को लेकर होता है। अपनी ताकत की सीमाओं से वाकिफ होकर, इसने वेतन संशोधन के मुद्दे पर उद्योग में कर्मचारियों और अधिकारियों की कुल एकता लाने के प्रयास किए। संयुक्त मंच ने पिछले दो वर्षों में अभूतपूर्व संख्या में विरोध

प्रदर्शन और हड़ताल की कार्यवाही की है। इन कार्यक्रमों को सभी वर्गों के कर्मचारियों और अधिकारियों से व्यापक और उत्साहजनक प्रतिक्रिया मिली है। ये कार्यक्रम पीएसजीआई उद्योग प्रशासन और सरकार दोनों द्वारा अपनाई गई इन्कार की नीति को तोड़ने के लिए आवश्यक थे। जिप्सा ने एक नया राग अलापना शुरू किया। अपनी पहली समझ कि उद्योग में मजदूरों की मांग को पूरा करने की क्षमता है, से उल्ट जिप्सा ने कहना शुरू कर दिया कि उद्योग की वित्तीय स्थिति वेतन वृद्धि का भार उठाने के लिए सहज नहीं है।

हम जिप्सा और सरकार के इन तर्कों से सहमत नहीं हैं। भले ही उद्योग की लाभप्रदता में कुछ गिरावट आई हो, लेकिन सवाल यह है कि ऐसी स्थिति के लिए कौन जिम्मेदार है? निश्चित रूप से इस पर कार्यबल को दोष और दंडित नहीं किया जा सकता है। सलाहकारों को शुल्क के रूप में भारी मात्रा में खर्च करने की प्रक्रिया को आगे बढ़ाने के बाद विलय की नीति पर बहुत अधिक अनिश्चितता और फ्लिप-फ्लॉप पैदा करने के लिए दोष स्पष्ट रूप से सरकार पर है। इस सफल उद्योग के निजीकरण पर सरकार के फैसले ने भी अनिश्चितता पैदा कर दी है। इन कम्पनियों के शीर्ष प्रबन्धन प्रतिस्पर्धी माहौल की चुनौतियों का सामना करने के तरीकों और साधनों को विकसित करने और सक्रिय पहल करने में उनकी विफलता के लिए समान रूप से जिम्मेदार हैं।

पीएसजीआई के कर्मचारी और अधिकारी उच्च उत्पादकता और समर्पित सेवाओं वाली कम्पनियों की प्रगति में भारी योगदान देने के लिए एक अच्छे वेतन संशोधन के पात्र हैं। इसलिए, लगभग पांच वर्षों के वेतन संशोधन के बाद वेतन में 7 प्रतिशत की वृद्धि के कारण उन्हें दिया गया प्रस्ताव सामान्य बीमा कर्मचारियों के आन्दोलन का अपमान है। यूनियनों ने इस मामूली पेशकश को ठीक ही खारिज कर दिया है और एलआईसी के साथ समानता की मांग की है जो एक ऐतिहासिक सत्य है। 15 जुलाई 2022 को एक दिवसीय हड़ताल में कार्यबल की भारी भागीदारी लड़ाई को आगे बढ़ाने के उनके संकल्प का सूचक है, चाहे वह कितना भी कठिन क्यों न हो। ज्वाइंट फोरम ऑफ ट्रेड यूनियन ने जिप्सा और सरकार को यह मानने के लिए मजबूर करने के लिए कि कर्मचारियों का क्या अधिकार है, विरोध कार्यवाही और हड़ताल की एक पूरी श्रृंखला का फैसला लिया है।

दृढ़ संकल्प और दृढ़ विश्वास के साहस के साथ लड़ाई में शामिल होना होगा। यह ध्यान में रखा जाना चाहिए कि वर्तमान में देश सबसे प्रतिक्रियावादी नवउदारवादी शासन द्वारा शासित है। यह सरकार पूरी तरह से मजदूर वर्ग के हितों के खिलाफ है। यह न केवल सार्वजनिक उद्यमों का निजीकरण करने के लिए आगे बढ़ रहा है बल्कि रोजगार की स्थायीता को भी समाप्त कर रहा है जैसा कि सशस्त्र बलों में भर्ती के लिए तैयार की गई अग्निपथ की योजना से देखा जा सकता है। लागत बचाने का इरादा है। एआईआईईए हमेशा मानता है कि वेतन संशोधन के लिए संघर्ष नियोजित और कर्मचारी के हितों के बीच एक गम्भीर संघर्ष है। वर्तमान संघर्ष के हालात कुछ भी हो, इस लड़ाई को जीतना ही है। इस समझ के साथ पीएसजीआई कम्पनियों के कार्यबल को दृढ़ विश्वास के साथ लड़ाई में शामिल होना चाहिए कि संघर्ष हमेशा काम आता है।





INDIA AT SEVENTY-FIVE

A Mixed Record of Achievements and Failures

India has a mixed record of successes and failures in the last 75 years. While it has remained united despite its diversities and still is a functional democracy, it is staring at grave challenges to the unity of its people and its democratic institutions. The celebration of 75th Anniversary of Independence is the time for a serious introspection. The causes and reasons for the failure of the promise to establish a State based on equality, justice and fairness have to be clearly analysed.

Amanulla Khan



The nation is celebrating the 75th anniversary of independence. The enthusiastic celebrations are a strong rebuttal of the rhetorical claims that true independence came to India only in 2014 by the sympathizers of the present ruling regime. The Prime Minister himself on numerous occasions has said that India was a slave nation for 1200 years before 1947 and termed this period of our shared history as Dark Age of our civilization. He has also asserted that the years after 1947 till 2014 as wasted years with the country recording no progress at all. The celebrations to commemorate 75th anniversary of independence provides an opportunity to reflect on the successes and failures of Independent India. The effort here is not to make a broad study of the developments of these 75 years but to briefly deal with some important aspects relating to the hopes and aspirations of the working class and the issue of national unity.

India's national liberation movement was arguably the biggest mass mobilization in human history. It was a united struggle of people belonging to all faiths, languages and classes to end the 200 years of colonial exploitation and in the process of which tens of thousands made supreme sacrifices. Unfortunately Independence came to British India with the country divided into two nations. This division

was facilitated not only by the machinations of the British but also by those forces who believed that Hindus and Muslims are two different nations and they cannot live together peacefully. The partition resulted into terrible violence in which it is estimated that around 1-2 million people lost their lives in either side of the borders. The partition was also the greatest migration in human history with around 15 million people uprooted from their homes and soil. It was a tragedy of gigantic proportions.

While Pakistan chose to be a theocratic state, the leaders of our national liberation movement decided to build India into a secular and democratic republic. The task was not easy. Independent India had to not only bring sanity to the situation but also had to assure the people that their needs for a decent and dignified life will be successfully met in the new nation. Independence was the dream of Indians not only of freedom from British rule but also of creation of a State of economic, social and political freedoms. Though India was a Jewel in the Crown of British Empire, when the Empire left, India was a very poor country. India at independence had a population of 340 million

with a per capita income of around Rs.250. The literacy rate was just a little over 12 percent. The GDP was estimated at around 2.7 lakh crore with agriculture contributing over 50% of the national GDP. The country did not have any modern industry. It must be noted that India was a very prosperous nation before colonization. Cambridge historian Augus Maddison writes that 'India's share of world income was 22.6% in 1700 (period, Prime Minister considers as Dark Age) almost equal to Europe's share of 23.3%.' By the time the British left India, its national income drastically fell down and in 1952 it stood at 3.8% of the total world income.

How did India perform in the last 75 years? The biggest achievement of India is to remain united. Not many including well meaning friends of India gave any chance of the country remaining united considering its huge diversities. Many predicted that the country will disintegrate due to the inherent contradictions. After all India is a country having people practicing all major religions of the world in its womb! It has 22 official languages, 122 major languages and nearly 1600 other spoken languages. Perhaps no other country could claim to have the number of languages spoken as in India. It has a rich diverse culture. These diversities were recognized by the founding fathers of the nation who made no attempts to bring uniformity or homogenizing of the

society. Instead they tried to build a nation on the basis of unity in diversity and the country was built on the foundations of secularism and democracy. 75 years later, India is staring at grave challenges to the unity of its people.

In the past one decade, Indian politics has taken a rightward shift. There are attempts to obliterate our shared history while at the same time institutional efforts are being made to falsify and rewrite history. Both in terms of culture and language, Indian society is sought to be homogenized on the slogan Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan. This is being resisted in different parts of the country and more particularly in Southern India. These attempts are being seen as a violent attack on federalism and on the distinct and diverse cultures this country is proud of. There is a virulent campaign and attack on the Muslim and Christian minorities. The minorities are being treated as enemies of the nation. This will have a disastrous impact on the unity of the country.

The second significant achievement is that India still has a functional democracy. Elections are periodically held and power transfer is smooth. This is significant considering the fact that a large number of countries that gained independence around the same time fell into the traps of autocrats and dictators. However Indian democracy endured except for a brief two year period when Internal Emergency was imposed. But then democracy is not all about elections. A participative democracy must have the involvement of people in the decision making processes. Here Indian democracy is exposed for its weaknesses and lack of inclusiveness. In the constitutional scheme of things, powers were separated to protect democracy and constitutional values. Over the years, these democratic institutions have been undermined. The Executive rather than upholding the principles of constitution today has become agent to implement the agenda of the ruling party. The judiciary is compromised; so too the Election Commission.

It is natural to expect the State to be neutral. But today Indian State is no longer neutral. It is fully and totally under the control of the capitalist class and has been unabashedly pursuing policies that favour the interests of this class. Today the Parliament and Legislatures are loaded with people having criminal records and business interests. Money power in elections has been legalized through Electoral Bonds. The Members of Parliament and Legislatures have



Recalling the photo by Danish Siddiqui, the Pulitzer prize winning photojournalist, of an incident of communal hate.

Cartoon courtesy: Bobby @bob_almost, twitter

become commodities for purchase and sale. A minority can easily be converted into majority and majority into minority through purchase and sale of parliamentarians and legislators. Therefore, it is not necessary to win elections on the basis of the peoples support to gain power; if you have the money it has become much easy to convert the loss into victory. Elections are fought not on the basis of issues relating to the life and living of the people but on emotional issues relating to religion and language. The society is polarized on religious lines to win elections. Therefore, all signs of Indian democracy slipping into electoral autocracy are clearly seen.

The Indian Constitution is acknowledged as one of the most progressive constitutions anywhere in the world. Granville Austin, the authority on Indian Constitution called it as the coming together of both the national and social revolutions. While the constitution gave fundamental rights, it also laid down the directive principles of the State policy. Therefore, the Constitution guaranteed the citizens, political, economic and social justice. Today the Indian Constitution is under severe stress and strain. There are talks of modifying or redrafting the constitution to suit the needs of India of 2047 by when the ruling classes feel that India would be a fully neoliberal State. The citizens are denied the freedoms enshrined in the Constitution. Today most of the guaranteed freedoms have become un-free. Therefore, there is a need for struggle to reclaim the freedoms guaranteed in the Constitution. The constitution mandates judiciary to protect citizens from the excesses of the executive but today judiciary in most of the cases is towing the line of the State. It has turned a blind eye to the infringements of the fundamental rights and looks unconcerned with the plight of the civil right activists who are languishing in jails with false charges without any trial. The media, whose responsibility in a mature democracy is to question the powers, unfortunately has become the cheerleaders of the government. This situation is really alarming.

The freedom from the British slavery gave the working class hopes of a better life. The country chose a capitalist path of development with the State creating the infrastructure for industrialization. Such a path has led the fruits of development and growth to flow to a small section bypassing the overwhelming sections of

the population. Despite registering progress on literacy, India's human development record is nothing to cheer about. The neoliberal policies of the last 3 decades have hugely widened inequalities. Major share of the national income and wealth has been cornered by the top 1% of the population. The country has huge unemployment problem. The rights of the workers are being attacked ferociously. With low income or no income overwhelming majority of people are eking out a miserable living. India today has the dubious distinction of having the largest number of poor, hungry and illiterate people in the world. Though the country made impressive progress, the economic growth has not translated into better life for the working and marginalized sections of the society. The path of development chosen by India at independence has clearly betrayed the hopes and aspirations of a dignified life by the working class and the marginalized sections.

The secular India had promised its minorities a place and opportunities in the country. More than 36 million Muslims stayed back in India after partition. They were impressed by the promise of a secular and democratic State and invested their future in it rejecting the theocratic State established in Pakistan. Today they feel let down. The Muslims rank very low in the social, economic and educational status. They constitute the most marginalized section. They have been left out of the process of political participation. It is important to note that BJP which is ruling both the centre and a large number of States does not have a single Muslim Parliamentarian. There is growing social disharmony with Muslims projected as the enemy of the State and are the target of attack



Cartoon courtesy: Abhi, Facebook

of the rightwing fundamentalist forces. What is disturbing is that the government and the head of the government have remained silent to the violent actions against the minorities. What was thought to be the fringe sometime back has become the mainstream now. The attempts to marginalize the minorities and exclude them from the development processes and refusal to accord them a rightful place in the nation will have grave consequences for the national unity.

India has also failed the vision of Dr Ambedkar. Dr Ambedkar who fought his entire life against the upper caste exploitation has now been appropriated by the same section for electoral gains. Dr Ambedkar who drafted the Constitution not only spoke about social justice but worked tirelessly for the annihilation of caste. Unfortunately caste today is entrenched in India as never before. Caste identities have become the most important tool to mobilize votes. Ambedkar has not only been betrayed by the Indian State but even those who have been benefitted from his struggles. They have willingly allowed themselves to be co-opted by the Indian ruling classes. It is another matter that overwhelming majority of Dalits and Tribals continue to live in abject conditions undergoing everyday humiliations.

India has a mixed record of successes and failures in the last 75 years. The celebration of 75th Anniversary of Independence is the time for a serious introspection. The causes and reasons for the failure of the promise to establish a State based on equality, justice and fairness have to be clearly analysed. Today the country is facing multiple challenges to its unity, economy and social harmony. The undermining of democracy and constitution will have grave consequences. It may not be wrong to say that India is already seeing early fascist tendencies with majoritarian politics taking deep roots. The present ruling regime may boast of India emerging as a world power. But what use is it to the common people if that power and the economic growth is not reflected in their living standards. Here lies the responsibility of the working class, the only class which is capable of uniting overwhelming sections of the Indian society. The working class must build up a broad based unity to lead the struggle to reclaim our freedoms and work for redeeming the promises of national liberation movement to construct a society based on justice, equality and fairness.

□



Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment, we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity. At the dawn of history, India started on her unending quest, and trackless centuries are filled with her striving and grandeur of her success and failures. Through good and ill fortune alike, she has never lost sight of that quest, forgotten the ideals which gave her strength. We end today a period of misfortunes and India discovers herself again. The achievement we celebrate today is but a step, an opening of opportunity to the greater triumphs and achievements that await us. Are we brave enough and wise enough to grasp this opportunity and accept the challenge of the future?

Freedom and power bring responsibility. The responsibility rests upon this Assembly, a sovereign body representing the sovereign people of India. Before the birth of freedom, we have endured all the pains of labour and our hearts are heavy with the memory of this sorrow. Some of those pains continue even now. Nevertheless, the past is over and it is the future that beckons us now.

That future is not one of ease or resting but of incessant striving so that we may fulfill the pledges we have so often taken and the one we shall take today. The service of India means,

A Tryst With Destiny

Jawaharlal Nehru's Address
to the Nation on 14th August 1947

the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and poverty and disease and inequality of opportunity. The ambition of the greatest men of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us, but as long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over.

And so we have to labour and to work, and to work hard, to give reality to our dreams. Those dreams are for India, but they are also for the world, for all the nations and peoples are too closely knit together today for any one of them to imagine that it can live apart. Peace is said to be indivisible, so is freedom, so is prosperity now, and also is disaster in this one world that can no longer be split into isolated fragments.

To the people of India, whose representatives we are, we make an appeal to join us with faith and confidence in this great adventure. This is no time for petty and destructive criticism, no time for ill-will or blaming others. We have to build the noble mansion of free India where all her children may dwell.

The appointed day has come - the day appointed by destiny - and India stands forth again, after long slumber and struggle, awake, vital, free and independent. The past clings on to us still in some measure and we have to do much before we redeem the pledges we have so often taken. Yet the turning-point is past, and history begins anew for us, the history which we shall live and act and others will write about.

It is a fateful moment for us in India, for all Asia and for the world. A new star rises, the star of freedom in the East, a new hope comes into being, a vision long cherished materializes. May the star never set and that hope never be betrayed!

We rejoice in that freedom, even though clouds surround us, and many of our people are sorrow-stricken and difficult problems encompass us. But freedom brings responsibilities and burdens and we have to face them in the spirit of a free and disciplined people.

On this day our first thoughts go to the architect of this freedom, the Father of our Nation, who, embodying the old spirit of India, held aloft the torch of freedom and lighted up the darkness that surrounded us. We have often been unworthy followers of his and have

strayed from his message, but not only we but succeeding generations will remember this message and bear the imprint in their hearts of this great son of India, magnificent in his faith and strength and courage and humility. We shall never allow that torch of freedom to be blown out, however high the wind or stormy the tempest.

Our next thoughts must be of the unknown volunteers and soldiers of freedom who, without praise or reward, have served India even unto death.

We think also of our brothers and sisters who have been cut off from us by political boundaries and who unhappily cannot share at present in the freedom that has come. They are of us and will remain of us whatever may happen, and we shall be sharers in their good [or] ill fortune alike.

The future beckons to us. Whither do we go and what shall be our endeavour? To bring freedom and opportunity to the common man, to the peasants and workers of India; to fight and end poverty and ignorance and disease; to build up a prosperous, democratic and progressive nation, and to create social, economic and political institutions which will ensure justice and fullness of life to every man and woman.

We have hard work ahead. There is no resting for any one of us till we redeem our pledge in full, till we make all the people of India what destiny intended them to be. We are citizens of a great country on the verge of bold advance, and we have to live up to that high standard. All of us, to whatever religion we may belong, are equally the children of India with equal rights, privileges and obligations. We cannot encourage communalism or narrow-mindedness, for no nation can be great whose people are narrow in thought or in action.

To the nations and peoples of the world we send greetings and pledge ourselves to cooperate with them in furthering peace, freedom and democracy.

And to India, our much-loved motherland, the ancient, the eternal and the ever-new, we pay our reverent homage and we bind ourselves afresh to her service.



IDEA of INDIA

Vision of Equal, Just and Fair Society

Sitaram Yechury
General Secretary, CPI(M)



The drawing in of the exploited majority of rural India; the drawing in of the socially oppressed people, especially those who continue to be subjected to obnoxious caste-based oppression and atrocities; the drawing in of the numerous linguistic nationalities; and the drawing in of the multi-religious Indian population, above all, the drawing in of all Indians in an inclusive path of economic and social justice, constituting the core of the inclusionary 'Idea of India', remains an unfulfilled agenda..... the RSS project constitutes a regression away from realizing the 'Idea of India' as inclusive nationalism.

The emergence of Nation States was integral to the long process of transition of human civilization from the stage of feudalism to capitalism. This period also threw up in Europe, the struggle for the separation of the State from the Church. The triumph of capitalism over feudalism, at the same time, signified the separation of the political authority from the myth of a divine sanction to rule invoked by Kings and Emperors across several civilizations during the high time of feudalism. The agreements of Westphalia finally signed in 1648 laid the principles of sovereignty of the Nation State and the consequent international laws.

During the course of the defeat of fascism in World War-II and the consequent dynamics of decolonization, the people's struggles for freedom from colonial rule threw up many constructs

regarding the character of these independent countries. For sure, such constructs arose out of a long struggle in individual countries against colonialism, including India during this period.

'Idea of India' — Evolution

The concept of the 'Idea of India' emerged during the epic people's struggle for India's freedom from British colonialism.

What is this 'Idea of India'? To put it in simple terms, though conscious of its complex multiple dimensions, this concept represents the idea that India as a country moves towards transcending its immense diversities in favour of a substantially inclusive unity of its people.

Prof. Akeel Bilgrami, in his introduction to a volume of essays containing revised versions of lectures on the relations between politics and

political economy in India given at a seminar in 2010 at the Heymen Centre for Humanities of Columbia University, New York (a Centre that he chaired then), says about my observations on the 'Idea of India', the following:

“(This) might be viewed as an ideal of a nation that rejects the entire trajectory in Europe that emerged after the Westphalian peace. What emerged then (and there) was a compulsion to seek legitimacy for a new kind of state, one that could no longer appeal to older notions of the ‘divine right’ of states personified in their monarchs. It sought this legitimacy in a new form of political psychology of a new kind of subject, the ‘citizen’, a psychology based on a *feeling* for a new form of entity that had emerged, the ‘nation’. This feeling, which came to be called ‘nationalism’, had to be generated in the populace of citizens, and the standard process that was adopted in Europe for generating it was to find an *external* enemy *within*, the outsider, the ‘other’ in one’s midst, (the Irish, the Jews, to name just two) to be despised and subjugated. In a somewhat later time, with the addition of a more numerical and statistical form of discourse, these came to be called ‘minorities’ and the method by which this feeling for the nation was created came to be called ‘majoritarianism’.” (*Social Scientist*, January-February 2011)

The RSS/BJP objective of replacing the secular democratic modern Indian Republic with their concept of a ‘Hindutva Rashtra’ is, in a sense, a *throw back* to the Westphalian model where the Hindu majority subjugates other religious minorities (mainly Muslim: the *external* enemy *within*) to foster ‘Hindu Nationalism’ as against ‘Indian Nationhood’. Ironically, it is they who import the Western concept of a Nation and impose it over Indian experience. This, in fact, represents a *throw back* to notions of nationalism that dominated the intellectual discourse prior to the sweep of the Indian people’s struggle for freedom. Such a State, based on ‘Majoritarianism’ – their version of a rabidly intolerant fascistic ‘Hindutva Rashtra’ – negates the core, around which emerged the consciousness of Indian Nationhood contained in the ‘Idea of India’ as a reflection of the emergence of “a political psychology of a new kind”.

The RSS/BJP ideologues dismiss the ‘Idea of India’ as a mere idea – a metaphysical concept. They reassert as a given reality Indian (Hindu) nationalism, negating the epic freedom struggle

of the Indian people. From this struggle emerged the concept of Indian Nationhood rising above the Westphalian concept of ‘nationalism’. The RSS/BJP today are spearheading the most reactionary ‘throwback’ to Indian (Hindu) nationalism as against the Indian Nationhood (the ‘Idea of India’) consciousness that emerged from the epic people’s struggle for freedom from the British colonial rule. Akeel Bilgrami asserts to this: “The prodigious and sustained mobilization of its masses that India witnessed over the last three crucial decades of the freedom struggle could not have been possible without an alternative and *inclusionary* ideal of this kind to inspire it.” (*Social Scientist*, Volume 39, Number 1-2, 2011)

India’s diversity – linguistic, religious, ethnic, cultural etc., – is incomparably vaster than in any other country that the world knows of. Officially, it has been recorded, decades ago, that there are at least 1,618 languages in India; 6,400 castes, 6 major religions – 4 of them originated in these lands; 6 anthropologically defined ethnic groups; all this put together being politically administered as one country. A measure of this diversity is that India celebrates 29 (and growing) major religio-cultural festivals and probably has the largest number of religious holidays amongst all countries of the world.

Those who argue that it was the British that united this vast diversity ignore the fact that it was the British which engineered the partition of the sub-continent leading to over a million deaths and a communal transmigration of a colossal order. British colonialism has the ignominious history of leaving behind legacies that continue to fester wounds through the partition of countries they had colonised – Palestine, Cyprus, countries in Africa etc., apart from the Indian sub-continent. It is the Pan-Indian people’s struggle for freedom that united this diversity and integrated more than 660 feudal princely states into modern India giving shape to a Pan-Indian consciousness.

Battle of Visions

The emergence of the conception of the ‘Idea of India’ was a product of Indian people’s freedom struggle. It arose from a continuous battle between three visions that emerged during the course of India’s struggle for freedom in the 1920s over the content of the character of independent India. The mainstream Congress vision had articulated that independent India should be a secular democratic Republic. The

Left, while agreeing with this objective went further to envision that the political freedom of the country must be extended to achieve the socio-economic freedom of every individual, possible only under socialism.

Antagonistic to both these was the third vision which argued that the character of independent India should be determined by the religious affiliations of its people. This vision had a twin expression – the Muslim League championing a Muslim nation and the RSS championing its 'Hindutva Rashtra'. The former succeeded with the unfortunate partition of the country, admirably engineered, aided and abetted by the British colonial rulers, with all its consequences that continue to fester tensions till date. The latter, having failed to achieve their objective at the time of independence, continued with their efforts to transform modern India into their project of a rabidly intolerant fascistic 'Hindutva Rashtra'. Mahatma Gandhi's assassination reflected the disappointment over the fact that the Indian freedom movement rejected the RSS vision and political project.

Clearly, the ideological battles and the political conflicts in contemporary India are a continuation of the battle between these three visions. Needless to add, the contours of this battle will define the direction and content of the process of the realisation of the 'Idea of India'.

Role of the Left

The Indian Communists played an important role in this process of the evolution of this 'Idea of India'. Indeed, for this very reason, given the Communist's visionary commitments to the long struggle for freedom, the Communist's role is absolutely central to the realization of the 'Idea of India' in today's conditions.

Consider this with reference to three issues that continue to constitute, today, the core of the 'Idea of India'.

Land Question:

The struggles on the land question unleashed by the Communists in various parts of the country in the 1940s particularly — Punnapara

Vayalar in Kerala, the Tehbagha movement in Bengal, the Surma Valley struggle in Assam, the Warli uprising in Maharashtra etc. — the highlight of these being the armed struggle in Telangana — brought the issue of land reforms to centre stage. The consequent abolition of the zamindari system and landed estates drew the vast mass of India's peasantry into the project of building the 'Idea of India'. These struggles contributed the most to liberating crores of people from feudal bondage. This also contributed substantially to creating today's 'Indian middle class'.

In today's conditions, the issue of forcible land acquisition has acquired a very dangerous dimension. Though the agri-laws had to be repealed by the strength of the historic farmers' struggle, efforts continue for legalising the indiscriminate forcible acquisition of agricultural land, forcibly dispossessing lakhs of farmers, aggravating the agrarian distress even further. The question of land, hence, remains a crucial issue for the Left forces, the most important political force that is today focusing on developing the agrarian struggles against the mounting distress and the neo-liberal policies that are intensifying the process of primitive accumulation of capital.

Linguistic Re-organisation:

Secondly, the Indian Communists spearheaded the massive popular struggles for the linguistic reorganization of the states in independent India. They, thus, are amongst some others responsible for creating the political 'map' of today's India on reasonably scientific and democratic lines. The struggles for Vishalandhra, Aikya Kerala and Samyukta Maharashtra were led, amongst others, by people who later emerged as communist stalwarts in the country. This paved the way for the integration of many linguistic nationalities that inhabit India, on the basis of equality, into the process of realizing the 'Idea of India'.

Even after the linguistic reorganization of states, today, many problems and demands for smaller states reflecting the lack of equality

The emergence of the conception of the 'Idea of India' was a product of Indian people's freedom struggle. It arose from a continuous battle between three visions that emerged during the course of India's struggle for freedom in the 1920s over the content of the character of independent India.Clearly, the ideological battles and the political conflicts in contemporary India are a continuation of the battle between these three visions. Needless to add, the contours of this battle will define the direction and content of the process of the realisation of the 'Idea of India'.

amongst the various ethnic identities that exist in the country, particularly in the North East. These can only be resolved by ensuring that all the linguistic groups and ethnic national identities are treated equally with concrete plans backed by finances to tackle the economic backwardness of these areas; and having equal access to all opportunities. It is only the Left that sincerely champions this cause to strengthen the unity and integrity of India.

Secularism:

Thirdly, the Communist’s steadfast commitment to secularism is based on the recognition of India’s reality. It merits repetition that the unity of India with its immense diversity can be maintained only by strengthening the bonds of commonality in this diversity and not by imposing any uniformity upon this diversity like what the communal forces seek currently to do. While this is true for all attributes of India’s social life, it is of critical importance in relation to religion. Following the partition of India and the horrendous communal aftermath, secularism became inseparable for the realization of the ‘Idea of India’. The Indian ruling classes, however, went only halfway in meeting the Communist objective of defining secularism as the separation of religion from politics. This means that while the State protects the individual’s choice of faith, it shall not profess or prefer any one religion. In practice, the Indian ruling classes have reduced this to define secularism as equality of all religions. Inherent in this is the in-built bias towards the religious faith of the majority. This, in fact, contributes to providing sustenance to the communal and fundamentalist forces.

On this score as well, in today’s conditions of the aggressive pursuit of Hindutva communalism, it is the Left that remains the most consistent upholder of secularism, spearheading the efforts to forge the broadest people’s unity against communalism and the steadfast fighter to defend the religious minorities; to ensure their security, safeguarding their identity as equal citizens of our country.

The drawing in of the exploited majority of rural India; the drawing in of the socially oppressed people, especially those who continue to be subjected to obnoxious caste-based oppression and atrocities; the drawing in of the numerous linguistic nationalities; and the drawing in of the multi-religious Indian population, above all, the drawing in of all Indians in an inclusive path of economic and social justice, constituting the core of the inclusionary ‘Idea of India’, remains an unfulfilled agenda. The struggles for realizing these incomplete tasks constitute the essential agenda of the CPI(M) and the Indian Left. Hence, their pivotal role in leading the struggles for the realisation of ‘Idea of India’.

RSS: Fascistic Agenda

The RSS fascistic agenda seeks to metamorphose India’s secular democratic Republican character into a rabidly intolerant fascistic ‘Hindu Rashtra’.

The RSS construct of nationalism is its ideological-theoretical justification for the establishment of its “Hindu Rashtra” (which is very distanced from Hinduism as a religion and should actually be called the ‘*Hindutva* Rashtra’). This is premised on an assertion of the late RSS chief that “Hindus have been in undisputed and undisturbed possession of this land for over eight or even ten thousand years before the land was invaded by any foreign race”. And, therefore, this land, “came to be known as Hindustan, the land of the Hindus” (*We or Our Nationhood Defined* - M. S. Golwalkar, 1939, Page 6). (Historical facts do not bother them. The word Hindustan was coined by the Arabs to describe lands beyond the river Sindhu (Indus). Phonetically ‘S’ becomes ‘H’ in Arabic!)

Hindutva supremacists, having thus “established” that the Hindus were always and continue to remain a nation on the basis of such an unscientific and ahistorical analysis, proceed to assert the intolerant, theocratic content of such a Hindutva nation:



Cartoon courtesy: Mika Aziz, facebook

“...The conclusion is unquestionably forced upon us that... in Hindusthan exists and must need exist the ancient Hindu nation and nought else but the Hindu Nation. All those not belonging to the national i.e., Hindu Race, Religion, Culture and Language naturally fall out of the pale of real `National' life.

“ Consequently only those movements are truly `National' as aim at re-building, re-vitalizing and emancipating from its present stupor, the Hindu Nation. Those only are nationalist patriots, who, with the aspiration to glorify the Hindu race and nation next to their heart, are prompted into activity and strive to achieve that goal. All others are either traitors and enemies to the National cause, or, to take a charitable view, idiots” (Golwalkar, 1939, pp. 43-44).

This is completely in contradiction to the “Idea of India” as envisaged by the freedom struggle. Jawaharlal Nehru describes in the *Discovery of India*, “India is an ancient palimpsest on which layer upon layer of thought and reverie had been inscribed, and yet no succeeding layer had completely hidden or erased what had been written previously.”

Further, Rabindranath Tagore says: “Aryans and non-Aryans, Dravidians and Chinese, Scythians, Huns, Pathans and Moghuls, all have merged and lost themselves in one body.” And, this body is India.

The RSS project constitutes a regression away from realizing the ‘Idea of India’ as inclusive nationalism. What is being promoted today is an exclusive Hindutva nationalism, to establish their fascistic ‘Hindu Rashtra’.

Apart from other dangerous manifestations, for such a regressive project to succeed in India, central is the RSS/BJP effort to replace history with Hindu mythology and philosophy with Hindu theology. This BJP government in India is systematically re-working the syllabus taught to our students and youth and appointing Hindutva ideologues to various key positions in higher education, research institutions and cultural academies.

Promoting Irrationalism

At a philosophical level, however, the effort is to resurrect irrationalism as the mainstay for the success of such populist nationalism. Georg Lukacs’ seminal contribution, “*Destruction of Reason*”, in the form of the critique of philosophical irrationalism needs to be recollected in our Indian context today. Lukacs

traces, amongst others, Germany’s (birth place of progressive rationalist philosophy in the 19th century) path to Hitler in the realm of philosophy. His central intention asserts “irrationalism as an international phenomenon in the imperialist world”.

Irrationalism, by its very definition, is an ideological trend hostile to Reason. It’s main objective, in all its manifestations, from the days of European enlightenment to today’s imperialist globalization is to challenge the power of Reason in human affairs and its capacity to provide knowledge about reality. Knowledge, at any point of time, can never explain the whole reality. However, irrationalism negates the dialectical relationship between reality and knowledge. Objective reality is, as Lukacs says, far richer and complex than our knowledge of it. Instead of seeking to bridge this gap on the basis of rationality, irrationalism concludes that one cannot obtain rational knowledge of the entire reality. The entire reality can only be grasped with ‘faith’ or ‘intuition’, considered a higher form of knowledge. ‘Hindutva’ feeds people with such ‘faith’ and, thus, feeds itself to promote its twin objectives of furthering the neo-liberal agenda and transforming India into a fascistic theocratic State.

The current Modi government represents the consolidation of the right-wing offensive aggressively pursuing the Hindutva communal agenda of the fascistic RSS. There is a multi-pronged attack: rabid neo-liberal reforms, growing communal corporate nexus, loot of national assets, crony capitalism and legalizing political corruption. There is a systematic effort to change the character of the Indian republic by assaulting the foundational pillars of Indian Constitution- secular democracy, federalism, social justice and economic sovereignty. All independent authorities established by the constitution – parliament, judiciary, election commission, CBI, ED etc sought to be utilized for furthering a Hindutva agenda. Vicious authoritarian assaults on civil liberties and democratic rights are mounted.

Hence, the central task today is to remove the BJP from controlling the reins of state power and government. All patriotic forces must unite to save India today in order to change India for a better tomorrow.

□



It is really time for us to think why and how we have moved so far from the spirit of the Republic? Why the gap between the poor and the rich has become so impossibly unbridgeable? Why social harmony has hit the rock-bottom? Why despite their material prosperity the minds of the middle classes are brimming with hatred? And why the dream of making India a 'great country' is making the minds and hearts of its people 'small'? As we get ready to celebrate Independence and the Republic of India, it is time to figure out if there is not a radical dichotomy between the spirit on which the Republic and the Constitution were founded and the spirit on which the Rashtra-Nirman Model is based.



G. N. Devy

Chairman, The People's Linguistic Survey of India

1

India: A Linguistic Civilisation

There is a raging debate in the country about the 'idea of India,' though the phrase is rarely explained by those who use it. Grasping its many meanings is left to the imagination of the context in which it is used and the audience to whom it is addressed. At times, it refers to the Indian republic founded upon the Constitution. At other times it evokes the grand vision of a timeless India with all its diversities, all its past epochs. It may refer to the many origins of India's diverse populations and cultures, or may even be used as a synonym for what we think was or is the Indian 'civilisation'. Thinking of a civilization is by no means easy.

If one were to go strictly along the dictionary path, one finds that the term 'civilisation' is rooted in the Latin 'civitas' or the English

'civil', pointing firmly to 'city' as the basis of 'civilisation'. In India, city or the urban social-structure first came into existence during the Indus period, found its apex for about six centuries – from the 24th century to the 19th century BCE—and declined. That was followed by half-a-millennium long gap, a time about which we know very little. The next known phase of India's pre-history emerges with the *Rigveda*, around the 14th century BCE, when India had entered a new system in which cities did spring up but the larger population of India had chosen the village-structure as its long-term 'civilisational' choice. Since then and till colonialism once again prioritised cities, for over 32 centuries, most of the knowledge production, artistic expression and metaphysical meditation

continued to spring up from remote and lonely places rather than from cities. Seen from that perspective, the term 'civilisation' is not so adequate to encompass India's past. However, by 'civilisation' one implies 'all that was there, great and not so great' a pervasively binding cultural thread, in the case of South Asia, one has to invoke language as being that principle, the *elan vital*, the substance and essence of the idea of India.

Linguists no more like to talk of Indian languages in terms of distinct linguistic families; they have moved to describing the vast multitude of Indian languages as 'a linguistic area' having a far greater mutual intelligibility between a language and its surrounding languages than in most other parts of the world. Language in India stands out not just by its great diversity but also as an unmistakable key to its cultural tensions and social stratification. Going by the estimates put forward by UNESCO and Ethnologue, there are about 7000 living languages in the world. Of these, about 12 percent are spoken in India. I should add that there is no decisive figure for the living Indian languages still available. The 2011 census had listed 1369 'mother tongues'; but every 'label'—name of a mother tongue as entered by people during the census—is not necessarily a 'language'. In fact, successive governments have been trying to minimize the figures by introducing absurd methods for language count. *The People's Linguistic Survey of India* (2010-2013) reported 780 languages, with the caveat that the PLSI may have missed on some 70 languages. So, one can assume that there are about 850 living languages in the country. What is most remarkable about this vast diversity is that in any given period in the past, we had a similar diversity, which is the foundation of India's unity .

2

Diversity and Federalism

When Sanskrit arrived in India 35 centuries ago, there already were languages which later were identified as Pali group of languages, Prakrits and ancient Dravidian. Besides, wherever our ancient ancestors had struck roots, the 'population knots' formed by them had given rise to local languages. When Panini formulated his system of grammar 25 centuries before our time, he mentioned not just one but numerous language varieties. Throughout the first millennium, works like Matanga's *Brihad-desi* and Kuntaka's *Vakrokti-jivita* were built round the idea of many language varieties and

in plays of Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti characters are seen using several languages within a single scene. During the first millennium, Al Biruni as well as Amir Khushro, again, reminded that to be India means to be speaking many languages. In the past, neither Sanskrit nor Persian, despite their metaphysical and material might, were able to replace regional and sub-national languages. The Prakrits continued to exist though Sanskrit declined. Modern Indian languages of the areas ruled by Persian speaking rulers continued while Persian all but disappeared. The colonial rule succeeded in imposing a common legal framework over the entire geographical span we call India; however, despite T. B. Macaulay's education policy, imposing a single language had not been dreamed of by the rulers.

After Independence, language diversity received a constitutional validity when the Constituent Assembly decided, after elaborate debate and discussion, to introduce the 8th schedule containing 14 languages as deserving of recognition. The expanded list now has in it twenty-two languages. Nearly 30 languages are hoping to be included in it. Add to this, several hundred languages of adivasis and nomadic communities, as also the languages of the North east and the coastal communities. While nationalism was spelt out in Europe during the 19th century in terms of linguistic unity, in India, speakers of these hundreds of different languages accepted to belong to a single nation because the Constitution had promised them the freedom of expression making it mandatory on the state to encourage languages 'without harming other languages.' Indians have been through several millennia multilingual in their thinking, life and habitat. The national anthem they sing with such great pride describes India primarily in terms of

Saaheb, why not merge all other languages in this currency note into Hindi?

Cartoon courtesy: P.Mahamud



some of its language communities, speakers of the Punjabi, Sindhi, Gujarati, Marathi, Dravidian languages, Odiya and Bangla. Quite evidently, Indians know that we are one nation not because we speak one language, or despite our speaking diverse languages, but because we have many languages. It was precisely for this reason that, soon after Independence, the Union Government set the State Reorganisation Commission and created 'linguistic' states. No patriotic Indian would ever think of our many languages as a liability, or provide an apology for language diversity; that diversity makes us proud as Indians, for that was at the heart of our idea of nationalism. To look at the linguistic texture of India askance is really to reject the constitutional basis of India's federalism.

3

Where Linguistic Federalism?

One of the paradoxes of the structure of Union Government is that, sadly, language as a subject is divided between the HRD Ministry and the Ministry of Home Affairs. Historically, the Home Ministry has often taken an anti-language-diversity stand. After the Bangladesh war, which was fought on the question of language, Home Ministry asked the census to introduce a completely arbitrary cut off figure of 10,000 for a language to qualify for being announced by the Census as a language. The absurdity needs no comment. Recently, Home Minister Amit Shah offered a piece of advice to states asking them to move over to Hindi as the language of inter-state communication. To decide on which language a state chooses to use, is entirely the prerogative of that state. Therefore, Home Minister should not have invited himself to express an opinion on this issue. Not surprisingly, his comment was seen as an extension of the BJP's majoritarian politics – Hindi being the language spoken in

Quite evidently, Indians know that we are one nation not because we speak one language, or despite our speaking diverse languages, but because we have many languages. No patriotic Indian would ever think of our many languages as a liability, or provide an apology for language diversity; that diversity makes us proud as Indians, for that was at the heart of our idea of nationalism. To look at the linguistic texture of India askance is really to reject the constitutional basis of India's federalism.

the country with the largest numbers—and also an articulation of the RSS idea of Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan nationalism as the only true nationalism. Little did he realise that deep within it is a view that goes against the very grain of Indian civilisation. India, if nothing else, is a linguistic civilisation, and its linguistic diversity is the perennial civilisational mark, its gene.

Some two thousand years ago, Tholkappiyar, the fabled author of *Tholkappiyam*, stated that poetic words can be distributed in four types: *Lyarcol*, *Thirisol*, *Thisaiccol* and *Vadasol*. Of these, he held, 'vadasol', words from northern languages, "become fit to be used in Tamil only when they adopt Tamil phonetics discarding their northern phonetics." From ancient times, sensitivity to language difference has almost been the core of Dravidic self-hood. A similar sensitivity existed among the speakers of Prakrits in ancient times. It was one of the Prakrits in which Mahavir had presented his teachings in the 6th century BCE. 18 centuries later, Acharya Hemachandra, a major Jain scholar, poet, mathematician and philosopher produced his *Desinamamala*, a treatise on the importance of Prakrit words used in Gujarat of his times as against those from Sanskrit. In the process, he gave a tangible form to the Gujarati language. Mahatma Gandhi, who defined the idea of selfhood for India in *Hind Swaraj* (1909), chose to write the iconic book in Gujarati. Language sensitivity has been a feature of selfhood in the case of every Indian language.

It would be unreasonable to expect a contemporary Indian to know about a two thousand year old *Tholkappiyam* or a nine century old *Desinamamala*. But would it be too much to expect the person to know the Constitution adopted by the republic seven decades ago? It states two things with utmost clarity. One, India, is 'a union of states'; and two, the official language used for communication between the states shall be the language that has been in use at the time of adoption of the constitution. The move from English to Hindi can take place only if, as the language related Articles unambiguously state, 'two or more states agree' for the shift. Article 351 (4) provides for a 'Committee consisting of thirty members, twenty from the Parliament and ten from State assemblies, for safeguarding language related provisions. The functions and the scope of the Committee as laid down by the Constitution are further clarified by the practice of distribution of language as a subject between two Ministries,

the HRD Ministry and the Home Ministry. The scope of the HRD Ministry with reference to language extends to education and promotion of cultural expression. The Home Ministry's scope extends to safeguarding relations of the states with the 'union', protecting the linguistic rights of language minorities and promotion of Hindi. The last of these, the Constitution states, has to be 'without interference with other languages'. Two crucial questions for the Home Ministry and its Hindi Language Committee should be, understood correctly in the light of the provisions of the Constitution, 'has Hindi seen any growth during the last seven decades? And, if there is such a growth, does it interfere with the growth of other Scheduled languages?'"

4

The Story Emerging from the Census

The Census data has quite a story to tell. In 2011, its speakers accounted for 43.63 percent of the total population, with a total of 52.83cr speakers. In 1971, the number was 20.27cr accounting for 36.99 percent of the total population. Between 2001 and 2011, the growth in proportion of population was 2.6 percent. Next most spoken language, Bangla, had a negative growth. It was spoken by 8.30 percent of Indians in 1991, 8.11 percent in 2001 and by 8.03 percent in 2011. Telugu, sliding down from 7.87 in 1991, to 7.19 in 2001 and 6.70 in 2011 has a similar story to tell. The one for Marathi is no different: 7.45 (1991), 6.99 (2001) and 6.86 (2011). Tamil, the oldest surviving language in the country should have received at least some attention from the Home Ministry. But its show is no different from that of Bangla, Telugu and Marathi. It recorded 6.32 percent of total population in 1991, 5.91 in 2001 and 5.70 in 2011. The only major languages to show a small decadal growth was Gujarati; and the only small yet scheduled language to show a good growth was Sanskrit.

This year, the census will have another count of languages in the country; and for reasons that are too obvious, the situation of all languages in the 8th schedule—except Hindi and Sanskrit, and perhaps Gujarati— will have worsened. In this context the Parliamentary Committee on promotion of Hindi should have expressed its concern on the decline of Indian languages, except Hindi, and the growth of Sanskrit, which has ceased to be a living language since the 9th century.

If all other languages show a relative decline, why Hindi is recording a steady growth? The 52.83 cr. speakers of Hindi as recorded in 2011 included not just the speaker of 'Hindi' but also those of more than fifty other languages. Bhojapuri claimed by more than 5 cr., with its growing cinema, literature, newspapers, songs, theatre and publication industry, is placed within Hindi. Most languages of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Jharkhand have also been pushed into the Hindi package. Even the Pawari language spoken mainly in Maharashtra and in some parts of Madhya Pradesh has been shown as 'Hindi', overlooking the fact that most Pawari speakers may find Hindi almost unintelligible. Thus the story of Hindi's growth is quite fictitious. Had the census not included these other languages under Hindi, the strength of Hindi speakers would have gone down to about 39 cr., just a little under 32 percent of the total population in 2011, and would have looked not too different from that of other scheduled languages. The Committee should also concern itself with making the Census data for Hindi more realistic. The data for English speakers stands in a far greater truthfulness. The Census 2011 reports a total of 2,59,678 Indians as English speakers, with 1,30,563 men and 1,29,115 women. Compare this with the least spoken among the scheduled languages: Manipuri is at 17.61 lac and Bodo at 14.82 lac. No further comment is necessary to show how utterly laughable the figures are.

5

Hindi-Hindu-Hindutva

Hindi is a beautiful language as any small or big language in the world is. Hindi cinema has brought to India some fame and some foreign currency. Its literature is rich and deserves mention with pride. Yet, it is also true that among the languages included in the 8th Schedule, it falls within the younger lot of

The fact remains that 69 cr, even in the 2011 census, were non-Hindi speakers. In that sense, it was not and cannot be the majority language of India. Quite likely, Mr. Shah's attempt to stoke Hindi pride is required as a balm for the vast unemployment that hurts the youth in the Hindi belt, an area so crucial for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Indian Republic: Then and Now

languages, with Tamil, Kannada, Kashmiri, Marathi, Oriya, Sindhi, Nepali and Assamiya having a much longer history. As a language of knowledge too Tamil, Kannada, Bangla and Marathi, with their abundance encyclopaedias and historical literature, quite easily outshine Hindi. A language evolves slowly and cannot be forced to grow by issuing ordinances. If all wisdom related to the history of Hindi, India's multilingualism, the federal structure of India and the language sensitivity in so many states should have guided the Committee and the Official Language Committee to accept linguistic realism, what is it that prompted Home Minister Shah to suddenly call for a Hindi-India?

It is perhaps not so much the RSS ideology of hyphenating Hindi-Hindu nationalism that has prompted Home Minister's Hindi assertion. It may also not be the BJP's idea of majoritarian democracy that has prompted it. The Hindi speakers in the country – despite the inflated figure of 52 cr. against 121cr put through the 2011 census, do not form linguistic majority. The fact remains that 69 cr, even in the 2011 census, were non-Hindi speakers. In that sense, it was not and cannot be the majority language of India. Quite likely, Mr. Shah's attempt to stoke Hindi pride is required as a balm for the vast unemployment that hurts the youth in the Hindi belt, an area so crucial for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Yet, he overlooked the fact that just as harping on Pakistan as a threat to security works for Hindu mobilisation, depicting English as an anti-national entity will no longer work to mobilise the Hindi speaking people. It makes utterly poor economics, and an absurd linguistics. Most of all it makes an anti-federal politics. Does India need these?

1950, the year in which India became a Republic, was the year of my birth, a coincidence willed neither by the republic nor me. The small town – more a village than a town— where I was born, was located in hills in western Maharashtra. Three centuries before my time, the lush green hills and rugged mountains surrounding it had heard the horse hooves and foot falls of men inspired by Shivaji's idea of 'swarajya'. Barely forty miles east of my village was Pune where eight decades before my birth Mahatma Jyotiba Phule had ignited the minds of a whole generation with the ideas of truth and rationality. It was Pune where Mahatma Gandhi was kept in prison because he had given the call for the 'quit India' movement and where his co-prisoner Kasturba breather her last. Just twenty-three years before my birth,

Dr. Babsaheb Ambedkar had mobilised the Chavadar Talav satyagrah at Mahad, some 25 miles distance from my village as the crow flies. Several young persons from my area had become martyrs for India's freedom in the decade preceding my birth. When the partition-tragedy came, some persons from Sind migrated to my town and were offered shelter. When Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated, the Brahmins who feared the backlash were given safe-stay by their large joint-family neighbours. Hindus, Muslims and all castes lived in the small town as an extended single society. There was personal enmity and friction among neighbours; but no disrespect to other religions. Anger there was, but hatred was rare. When the republic was born, and me too, the town could grasp the spirit on which it was built. People in the town had not read the Constitution, as there was hardly anybody there who understood English; but they had seen Dr. Ambedkar and heard his words. Therefore, the people quickly grasped the spirit of the constitution. Previously my town had a raja, a chhota raja if you like, as it was listed in official colonial records. The rule of the chhota raja had been over since the Bombay Presidency Assembly came into existence. People quickly took to the grammar of elections. They understood what a people's representative means. My little town was perhaps the microcosm of India with its seven lakh villages.

Several decades later I moved to Gujarat for work. I arrived there when the sepia tone

ONE NATION ONE LANGUAGE



Cartoon courtesy: Sandeep Adhwaryu, Times of India

photographs of Gandhi, Azad, Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru had started looking faded in people's memory. By then corruption, commercialisation, communalism and casteism had taken a firm hold of India's mind. Communal riots around festival processions had become the order of the day. Police encounters – fake or faithful— too were seen no longer as shocking. People had started choosing residence in closed and gated colonies. Nuclear families ideal for a photo-image of happiness, decked with material comfort and worldly success, had in their minds an inexplicable hatred. People had stopped being angry for what was wrong in the society; but they were constantly in a mood of hating smaller communities and poorer sections. It was natural that my thoughts went back to my tiny, illiterate town inhabited by people without any significant material means. And it was not just nostalgia; it was also an attempt at sketching the biography of the Republic. Here is what I thought.

In my childhood it was possible for children from all section of the society to get free or almost free education. It is true that there were not enough schools and colleges for all; but the ones that were there were available even for low middle-class students. Now, in the twenty-first century, there were schools of a wide variety and colleges and universities of all kinds – public and private, Indian and off-shore overseas universities— and yet education had become prohibitively costly for most families. In my mid-twentieth century village, doctors were very few and mostly General Practitioners. Specialisation was not heard of. In the city of the twenty-first century, doctors had acquired super-specialisation. However, the costs of consultation, treatment and medicines were

beyond the means of most middle class families, unless they had secured themselves through health insurance. In my last century village, most houses were built of mud-walls and covered with leaky roofs.

In the twenty-first century Indian city, the houses were made of sturdy steel and concrete with an amazing range of tiles and filled with fancy gadgets. However, the neighbours were mostly of a single religion, in many cases, of a single caste as well. In my town, garbage collection by the town council was random. Yet, the safai-staff was employed by the council. In the 21st century, the city council had sold out the function to a private company. It was the same with the drinking water. People paid taxes to the city-council; and at the same time, they also paid charges to the private company. When India became republic, the roads, rivers, hills and sea-shores belonged to the government. In the new-model, they belonged to private players. Complaints about school, medicine, water, power, roads, open spaces and all that we call our country, when they were made, had to be recorded on a machine-managed telephone number, and the conversation was rarely problem solving.

In the little town there was a small public library set up by the Raja so that children read and get to know about the world. In the twenty-first, large city of Gujarat, there were digital and plastic-flex hoardings with larger than life photographs of a leader, and their main job was to conceal rather than to reveal facts. In that model of society, love for people from another religion was seen as loyalty to another country. During my time in Gujarat, whenever I travelled to other states, people in those states used to tell me how much they admired the Gujarat Model. My telling them that not all in Gujarat was well, that the Adivasis were still kept far off from their legitimate rights and entitlements, the schedule castes still had to bear the brunt of caste prejudice and the Muslims there were victims of an incurable hatred, was quickly disregarded as an 'opinion'. There were few takers for my pleading then. Later, that model came to rule India and started patting its back as the 'Rashtra-Nirman Model.'

Today, as we step into the 75th year of Independence, it is really time for us to think why and how we have moved so far from the spirit of the Republic? Why the gap between the poor and the rich has become so impossibly unbridgeable? Why social harmony has hit

During my time in Gujarat, whenever I travelled to other states, people in those states used to tell me how much they admired the Gujarat Model. My telling them that not all in Gujarat was well, that the Adivasis were still kept far off from their legitimate rights and entitlements, the schedule castes still had to bear the brunt of caste prejudice and the Muslims there were victims of an incurable hatred, was quickly disregarded as an 'opinion'. There were few takers for my pleading then. Later, that model came to rule India and started patting its back as the 'Rashtra-Nirman Model.'

the rock-bottom? Why despite their material prosperity the minds of the middle classes are brimming with hatred? And why the dream of making India a 'great country' is making the minds and hearts of its people 'small'? As we get ready to celebrate Independence and the Republic of India, it is time to figure out if there is not a radical dichotomy between the spirit on which the Republic and the Constitution were founded and the spirit on which the Rashtra-Nirman Model' is based.

I, born in the year in which the Republic was born, say, in humility that I have learnt from the people of India over the last seven decades, a country can become great only when its people learn the virtues of large-heartedness, compassion, co-existence and respect for others. Respect for the constitution that is the mother of freedom, equality before law and a person's dignity for every Indian, is and will be the only touchstone for one's love for India. Perhaps it is not an over-statement to say that as we recall the freedom struggle, India has to choose between the Constitution and other model that has been over-busy subverting it.

7

India with Disgraced Minorities and Women

The thread of this story goes back a long way in history of civilisations. There is a widespread superstition in many Hindu communities in India that Satvai, a weird goddess, writes the destiny of a new born baby in the first few days of its birth. The name Satvai is used in Marathi ironically for a quarrelsome, morally lax and an ungainly woman. The parallel of the weird Indian goddess can be found in the Greek superstition related to Moirai. The Greek Moirai has no known connection with the India Mari-aai, a supernatural bringer of small-pox. The ancient Greeks used the term Moirai as a group term for three goddesses, or Fates, who were believed to weave the thread of one's life. Clotho is the spinner, Lachesis is the one who provides the yarn and Atropos, the one who cuts the thread of life, all of them quite unbearable in their appearance. It is difficult to say if Brahma, Vishnu Mahesh of Hindu mythology were related with these. The Greek belief in the weirdness of the three Fates has seen manifestations in subsequent ages in Europe. The three witches of Shakespeare's Macbeth is an instance. In a much transformed shape, they appear in *A Question of Silence*, a 1980s cinema classic

directed by by Marleen Gorris. As all Trads (an abbreviation that the ultra-Right traditionalists have chosen for themselves) know it well, India has not lagged behind in continuing the tradition. The recent manifestations of Satwai and Mari-aai are bullibai and sullideals.

The weirdness begins with their names. The term 'bulli' means in Marathi 'the genital of a male child', while 'bai' means a woman. Sulli, as known to the digitally-wired young generation, is the name of a young rebellious singer who ran a campaign against digital harassment. This Korean pop-singer of great courage and talent came into light when she was just eleven years old and died when she was barely twenty-five. To use her name for an app developed for digital harassment has deepened the term weird. Using the digital anonymity, Trads in India are putting up many women on digital auction. This takes us back to ancient Greeks, for auctioning women was a practice that they followed and handed down to the ancient Romans. Subsequently, the Romans added to it the auctioning of slaves as well. It is not as if the Greeks, Romans alone held patents for auctioning women and slaves. Asian civilisations too have had their share in reducing women to items of material property.

India had its variants of oppressing women such as placing them as gambling stakes— as Druapadi of the *Mahabharat* may indicate— or selling wives— as the tale of Harishchandra and Taramati may indicate. Yet, the practice was not approved by any Hindu *darshana* or *shastra* or except the *Manusmriti* which proposed licence to Brahmins to plunder the womenfolk of other *varnas*. It was for the *Manusmriti*'s blatant advocacy of discrimination and oppression that Dr. Ambedkar found it necessary to publicly burn its copy.

The difference between various ancient civilisations with regard of the ignominious practice of auctioning women can become

I, born in the year in which the Republic was born, say, in humility that I have learnt from the people of India over the last seven decades, a country can become great only when its people learn the virtues of large-heartedness, compassion, co-existence and respect for others. Respect for the constitution that is the mother of freedom, equality before law and a person's dignity for every Indian, is and will be the only touchstone for one's love for India.

clearer if we look at the trajectory of the term 'auction'. What is 'auction'—competitive sell—in English was 'aukan' in earlier times and meant 'augmentation.' An yet older version, the Greek 'auxo', meant 'increase' or 'growth'. It had a distant relative in the Indic language, *ojas*, which meant 'energy'. So at one end of the etymological spectrum of 'auction' is the portrait of a woman as a source of power, at the other end it is reduced to a mere 'multiplication of price'. Not quite aware that woman, in several noblest traditions of thought in ancient India, was seen as energy, light, and moral depth. There is of course the worst too in those ancient thought traditions. The bulli-sulli clique has buried the best and revived the worst in Indian history by bringing woman under the auctioneer's hammer, bringing their view of woman to rank with the Taliban perspective of femininity.

As we celebrate the 75th year of India's independence and recall the matchless sacrifice of martyrs for the cause of India's freedom, there is reason to believe that the *lalat-rekha*, the destiny, of future India is being re-written by the weird Bullibais, Sullibais and Trads. The struggle for independence was led by a great man whose spinning wheel defeated the British might resting on its wealth, army and guns. Currently, the yarn being spun is by the cyber-space obsessed teen-agers whose minds are poisoned by a relentless demonization of dalits, women, adivasis, Muslims, Christians, liberals, thinkers, artists, writers, film makers and just anybody who dare oppose the regime.

After all, what harm have the hapless Muslim women put up for digital auction have caused to the regime, to the RSS, the Trads and the pirates surfing in digital oceans? On the eve of Independence, as the tricolour was unfurled, Jawaharlal Nehru had used the expression

'our tryst with destiny' to describe the unique moment. In the 75th year of Independence, India's destiny is being re-written by the 'net-wired' Trads and trolls in bold letters of scorn and hatred. A Niraj Bishnoi can be seen as a perpetrator of the scandalous cyber attack on the privacy and dignity of women. He and the others like him are also victims of the ideology of the new brand of Hindutva. Conspiring invisibly in the apparent anonymity of the cyber space, they are victims of the vicious climate of opinion that the regime has consciously fostered. The desire to wipe out India's cultural memory, rework its history and re-write its destiny has turned into the theatre of the weird. In it mothers, sisters, daughters, wives are up for auction as gleefully as are the PSUs, universities, airports, roads, forests and the fancy used-suits of its poster-boys.

8

Reinventing History: The Bull and the Horse

In the entire discussion related to the Pegasus snooping case what was not noticed is the re-play of mythology. It is known that Pegasus, the winged sea-horse of Greek mythology predates by nearly five centuries the famous Trojan horse made of wood used for breaching the Ilium citadel of Troy. Horses were in use in ancient Greece in Homer's time, but not much before his time. They, the horses, spread out from central Asia to Europe around 2000 BC. In contrast, domestication of horse, horse breeding, using horse driven chariots for warfare arrived in India a little later, after the decline of the Harappan civilisation.

The domesticated animal that the Harappans adored was bull. And bullocks indeed had been domesticated in India at least three millennia



Cartoon courtesy:
Alok Nirantar, Facebook

The bulli-sulli clique has buried the best and revived the worst in Indian history by bringing woman under the auctioneer's hammer, bringing their view of woman to rank with the Taliban perspective of femininity.

As we celebrate the 75th year of India's independence and recall the matchless sacrifice of martyrs for the cause of India's freedom, there is reason to believe that the *lalat-rekha*, the destiny, of future India is being re-written by the weird Bullibais, Sullibais and Trads.

prior to the mature phase of the Harappan civilisation, since agriculture had been adopted by a large number of Indians by some 6000 years before present. The humped bull seals are in excavations of Harappan sites. One does not know exactly when, but the bull festival had been established in many parts of pre-historic India. Even today, in Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Andhra and Madhya Pradesh people celebrate every year the 'beil-pola', bullock felicitation day (which falls on the 18th August this year). The name from early-history that springs to the mind in association with the bull-based agrarian culture is that of the king Bali of the 10th century before Christ. His rule had spread from Rajasthan to deep south and east. The Onam in Kerala is a clear recall of the Mahabali or Maveli. It is certain that the bull existed in India much before the breeding and domestication of horses were tried out. During the early Vedic period, India witnessed a clash of civilisations centred round bulls (and cows) and round horses, respectively. The conflict was between pastoralists and farmers, on the one hand, and the warring people and groups given to fire-sacrifice rituals, on the other hand. There are five hymns about the horse in the Rig Veda, but only one about the bull. The story of the *Mahabharata* is an ample evidence of the narrative of the clash.

All of this, otherwise an irrelevant mythological and pre-historic information becomes important today as, in an altogether different caste, the same clash has taken centre stage in India. When the farmers in protest had been camping outside Delhi for a year, the regime had remained indifferent to their legitimate demands. Denying the minimum selling price to the farm produce to farmers already in debt traps and suicide spree, imposing hurriedly passed Agriculture Bills favouring corporate, ignoring the striking farmers, placing barriers and nails in their way, their deaths during the months of protest, are sadly not seen as important issues. The big issue is to name them Khalistani-separatists, anti-social *mawalis* and traitors fattened by funds coming from Canada. In the Marathi language, the term 'Bali-Raja' is used as a symbolic synonym for farmers. Mahatma Jyotiba Phule had described Bali as the saviour of the oppressed. During the Dipawali festival, on the day dedicated to cow, the *vasu-baras*, in every house in Maharashtra a wishful prayer is recited: *ida pida talo, baliche rajya yevo* – "may the calamities pass, may the

Bali rule return." Indeed, Bali is the ultimate hero for the non-Vedic India.

The RSS idea of Hindutva is trained towards going past the Constitution and reviving cultural values and mores of what it thinks was the Vedic culture. This is not to undermine the value of the India's intellectual and literary achievements in the early historical times. However, an uncritical glorification of the Vedic culture flies straight in the face of the vision of India that Phule, Periyar and Ambedkar saw. The 'past-glory fixation' of the RSS is founded in the self-perception as a people who remained enchained for centuries. It rests on an unchecked fantasy of the Sanskrit speaking Aryans going all over the world—riding galloping horses— and taking their wisdom to the rest of the known old world. History, hardly corroborates this wishful view. The cultural discourse in India today is being pulled in opposite directions by horses and bulls.

The sprawling propaganda machinery of the RSS, BJP and its numerous outfits will no doubt spread false stories of how the Christian population has been increasingly posing a threat to Hindus. One has seen this happening when attacks were mounted on places of prayer in Gujarat during the first term of Narendra Modi as CM. One of those vandalised places was in Dang, a tribal district in south Gujarat. It was no more than a small hut with walls made of bamboo. The tribal communities, Kunknas, Varlis, Dodiya and Dangis had no emotional or theological connection with the Sanatan Hindu dharma. The missionaries working there were genuinely interested in providing education and health-care to the people whose traditional forest rights had been vastly compromised by the timber-sharks. Yet, the newspapers in Ahmedabad and Surat had depicted the attack in reports laced with the innuendoes hinting at evangelism.

The question is, why the RSS-BJP and its various fronts are so keen on going against

The question is, why the RSS-BJP and its various fronts are so keen on going against the tenets of the constitution, business interests of India and the principles of civility that democracy cherishes? The constant harassment of religious minorities, deprived castes and tribes springs from the RSS-BJP's need to keep the multitude of castes and communities bundled together as 'Hindu' in a silent fear of those in power.

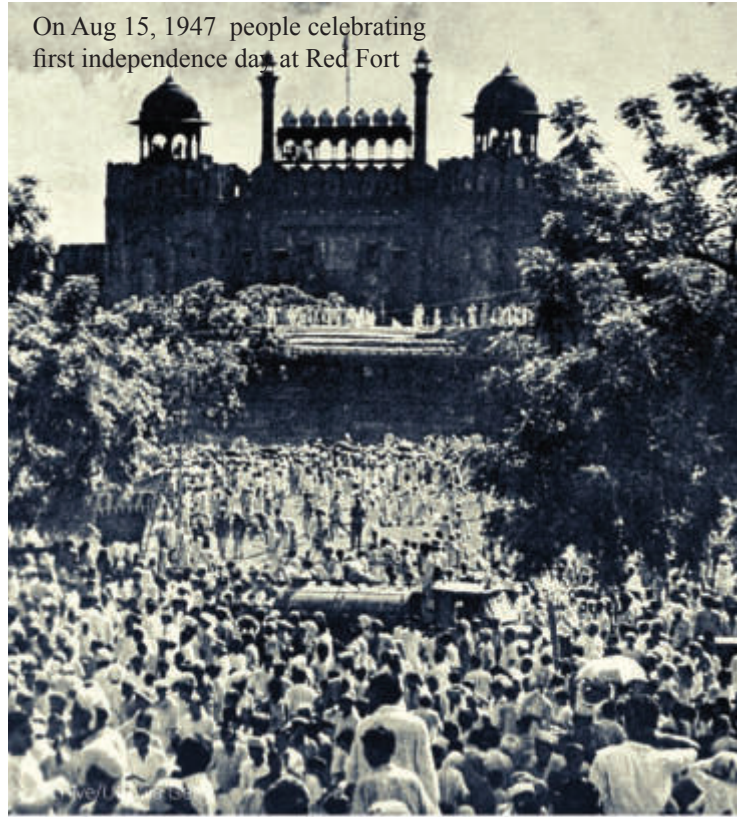
the tenets of the constitution, business interests of India and the principles of civility that democracy cherishes? Why does the presence of a miniscule minority population get government after state government worrying about the health of faith and prayer traditions of the majority population? The truth is that the Hindutva brigade has hardly anything to do with either the profound wisdom in the thought-traditions that make India a civilisation or the need for internal social reforms that caste and gender injustice calls for. None of the schools of thought or sect-philosophy of Indian tradition preaches and promotes hatred, scorn and discrimination. The constant harassment of religious minorities, deprived castes and tribes springs from the RSS-BJP's need to keep the multitude of castes and communities bundled together as 'Hindu' in a silent fear of those in power. Acts, actions and fake-news that are apparently directed towards religious minorities are in fact the means of sending intimidating signals to the followers of Hindutva for the sake of maximising electoral returns.

Conclusion

The mass-psychology of fascism thinks of intimidation of a few as a weapon for keeping the masses tethered to an ideology of hatred. Love is a word scary for it. It is quick to equate it with a *jihad*, for in hatred does fascism take birth and in hatred does it thrive. Can we allow it to overtake Indian Constitution and India's Federalism? All of us have to act, act in unity, act with courage and safeguard the diversities and the federal structure of our country which is unambiguously defined in the Constitution as 'a Union of States'.

□

On Aug 15, 1947 people celebrating first independence day at Red Fort



आजादी की पूर्व संध्या पर दिए गये अपने प्रसिद्ध भाषण में तत्कालीन प्रधानमंत्री जवाहरलाल नेहरू ने नियति से किये गए वादे का जिक्र किया था। उनका कहना था कि हमने नियति से वादा किया था कि हमारा मुल्क एक दिन आजाद होगा और आज हमने उसे पूरा कर दिखाया है। अब हम एक खुदमुखार देश हैं, जो अपने मुस्तकबिल का फैसला स्वयं करेगा। सनद रहे कि उस वादे को पूरा करने के लिए हमारे देश की कई पीढ़ियों ने संघर्ष किया और जिसके लिए हजारों लाखों लोगों ने शहादतें भी दी। यह एक ऐसा संघर्ष था, जो तीसरी दुनिया के देशों के लिए भी रोड मैप बना, जिस पर चलते हुए कई अन्य पराधीन मुल्कों ने स्वतंत्रता का स्वाद चखा। हमारा वह संघर्ष आज भी दुनिया भर में प्रेरणास्रोत के रूप में देखा और समझा जाता है।

स्वतंत्रता प्राप्ति के बाद सबसे पहला सवाल, जो हमारे सामने उपस्थित हुआ, वह यह था कि यहाँ से अब मुल्क की दिशा क्या होनी चाहिए। अब हमारे पास फैसले लेने की स्वतंत्रता थी तो दूसरी तरफ जिम्मेदारियों की फेहरिशत भी। अब हमारे सही निर्णय देश को आगे ले जा सकते थे तो गलत निर्णयों की कीमत भी हमें स्वयं ही चुकानी थी। ऐसे कठिन समय में स्वतंत्रता आन्दोलन के पुरोधाओं ने देश को संचालित करने के लिए एक विस्तृत नियमावली बनाई, जिसे हम संविधान के नाम से जानते हैं। यह संविधान हमारे स्वतंत्रता आन्दोलन की विरासत से निकला था, इसलिए इसमें वे सभी उम्मीदें और सपने तैर रहे थे, जिसे लेकर हमने आजादी का संघर्ष लड़ा था। यदि हम इसकी आत्मा समझी जाने वाली प्रस्तावना को देखते हैं, तो यह बात साफ़ हो जाती है कि हमने अपने लिए आधुनिक लोकतंत्र की





One of the speaking images of the photojournalist, late Danish Siddiqui during farmers' year-long protest at Delhi gates - Courtesy: Reuters

आजादी के 75 वर्ष आशाएं और निराशाएं

रामजी तिवारि



वह प्रणाली चुनी थीए जो समानता, स्वतंत्रता और न्याय के मूलभूत सिद्धांतों पर चलती है। साथ ही जिसमें लोकतंत्र के सभी आधुनिक मूल्यबोध शामिल हैं, जो मानवीय गरिमा को सबसे उच्च स्थान देते हैं।

हमारा संविधान देश के भविष्य का रोड मैप तो था ही, इसी आधार पर हमारी दिशा और प्रगति का मूल्यांकन भी होना था। अब हमारे लिए यही नियति से किया गया वादा था, जिस पर हमारी उपलब्धियां और कमियां कसी जानी थी। इसलिए कहा जा सकता है कि आजादी के इस अमृत वर्ष में अपने आपको परखने का मुख्य आधार भी यही है। इसका मतलब यह नहीं कि हम दुनिया से अपने आपको काट लें और केवल संविधान के आधार पर ही अपना मूल्यांकन करें। वरन हमें इस आधार पर भी जांचा और परखा जाएगा कि हमारे साथ आजाद हुए देशों के मुकाबले हमारा प्रदर्शन कैसा रहा है।

यदि हम इन सभी आधारों पर अपना मूल्यांकन करते हैं तो हमारी उपलब्धियां गर्व करने लायक दिखाई देती हैं। अब्बल तो इसलिए कि आजादी के साथ ही हमने जो संविधान बनाया, वह दुनिया भर में एक आदर्श के रूप में देखा जाता है। वह विस्तृत तो है ही, साथ ही साथ आधुनिक लोकतंत्र के सभी मानदंडों पर खरा उतरने वाला भी है। खासकर तब, जब हम आजादी के समय की विपरीत परिस्थितियों को याद करते हैं। जिस समय देश आजाद हो रहा था उस समय साम्प्रदायिक विभाजन के कारण देश का बंटवारा भी हो रहा था। एक धर्म की लगभग आधी आबादी अपने के लिए धार्मिक आधार पर एक अलग देश की मांग कर रही थी और वह सफल भी हुई थी। उस स्थिति में भारत ने धर्मनिरपेक्षता को अपना ध्येय बनाया, जिसका परिणाम यह हुआ कि धार्मिक आधार पर अलग मुल्क की स्थापना के बाद भी, उसी धर्म के

75th Anniversary of our Independence has once again given us the opportunity to assess how far we have travelled in fulfilling our 'Tryst with Destiny', and also where we stand at the global level, on the issue of democratic and modern values. We should understand that the diversity of our nation itself is our strength and our Republic will be strong only if we move forward respecting the diversities and learning from each other. Only an inclusive Republic which has provided basic necessities of life to all of its citizens can advance further on the path of progress.

आधे लोगों ने भारत में ही रहने का फैसला किया। यह इस बात का द्योतक था कि देश के सभी छोटे, बड़े समुदायों को यह भरोसा था कि उनके साथ भी समान व्यवहार होगा। देश सबको साथ लेकर आगे बढ़ेगा।

जिस सार्वजनिक वयस्क मताधिकार को लागू करने में यूरोपीय देशों को सैकड़ों वर्ष लगे, वह हमारे देश में आजादी के साथ ही अस्तित्व में गया। हमने अपने नागरिकों के लिए दुनिया के सबसे आधुनिक और विकसित मौलिक अधिकार लागू किये। स्वतंत्र प्रेस और निष्पक्ष न्यायपालिका हमारे लोकतंत्र के आधार स्तम्भ बने। जहाँ हमने समानता, स्वतंत्रता और न्याय के आधार सिद्धांतों को अपनाया, वहीं अपने समय के सबसे प्रगतिशील मूल्य सकारात्मक भेदभाव को भी संविधान में जोड़ा। अर्थात् जो लोग सदियों के सामाजिक भेदभाव के कारण पिछड़ गये थे, उन्हें समाज की मुख्यधारा से जोड़ने के लिए कुछ विशेष सुविधाओं की व्यवस्था की गयी। यह सब हमने अपनी आजादी के तुरंत बाद हासिल किया, जो आज भी हमारे लिए सबसे मार्गनिर्देशक मूल्य बने हुए हैं।

इन आदर्श सिद्धांतों पर चलने का ही असर था कि हमने देश के लगभग प्रत्येक क्षेत्र में शानदार प्रगति हासिल की। हम आजादी के दो दशक के भीतर ही खाद्यान्न के मामले में आत्मनिर्भर हो गये, और अपने उद्योग धंधों को लगभग शून्य से आरम्भ कर दुनिया में प्रतियोगिता करने के स्तर तक पहुँचे। विज्ञान और तकनीक में हम क ख ग से आरम्भ कर दुनिया के अग्रणी मुल्कों की कतार में पहुँचे। शिक्षा और चिकित्सा में हमारी उपलब्धियाँ कमाल की रही हैं। और सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी के क्षेत्र में हमारा डंका दुनिया भर में बजता है। आज हमारे पास देश के मूल ढाँचे को संभालने के लिए सावर्जनिक क्षेत्र के लगभग सभी महत्वपूर्ण संस्थान हैं। वहीं दूसरी तरफ उन्हें प्रतियोगी और धारदार बनाये रखने के लिए निजी क्षेत्र की समानान्तर व्यवस्था भी है। खनिज तेल और कुछ प्राकृतिक धातुओं को छोड़कर आज लगभग सभी मामलों में हमारा मुल्क न सिर्फ आत्मनिर्भर है, वरन वह दुनिया को कुछ दे सकने की स्थिति में भी है। दुनिया भर में चलाये जाने वाले तमाम शांतिपूर्ण अभियानों में भारत की भूमिका भी प्रशंसनीय रही है।

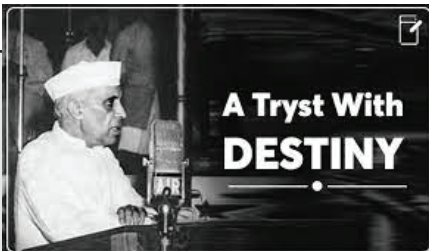
लेकिन यदि ये उपलब्धियाँ हमारे लिए गर्व का विषय रही हैं तो कुछ बातें ऐसी भी हैं, जिनमें हमारा प्रदर्शन निराशाजनक भी रहा है। अब्बल तो यही कि देश की आजादी के समय अपने आपसे किये गए बहुत सारे वादे आज भी अधूरे ही रह गये हैं। हमने सोचा था कि यह देश सबको साथ लेकर आगे बढ़ेगा। लेकिन ऐसा नहीं हुआ। आजादी के समय धर्म को लेकर जो विभाजन पैदा हुआ, वह किसी न किसी रूप में आज भी बरकरार है। जिस राजनीति पर देश को दिशा दिखाने की जिम्मेदारी थी, उसने इस विभाजन को लगातार बनाए रखा। जातिगत भेदभाव और साम्प्रदायिक वैमनस्य अभी

भी हमारे समाज की हकीकत है, जिसके कारण हमें दुनिया के सामने शर्मिन्दा होना पड़ता है। क्षेत्रीय और भाषायी विभेदों ने भी समय-समय पर हमें परेशान ही किया है।

यह सही है कि हमने एक भूखे नंगे देश से आरम्भ करके लंबा सफ़र तय किया है। लेकिन हकीकत तो यह भी है कि आज भी सबसे अधिक भूखे और बदहाल लोग हमारे ही देश में हैं। रोटी, कपड़ा, मकान, शिक्षा और स्वास्थ्य जैसी बुनियादी सुविधाओं से वंचित लोगों का सबसे बड़ा हुजूम हमारे देश में ही निवास करता है। असमानता के जितने भी माडल दुनिया में प्रचलित हैं उन सबमें हमारा प्रदर्शन शर्मनाक है। एक तरफ हम दुनिया के सबसे अधिक अरबपतियों का नेतृत्व करते हैं तो दूसरी तरफ सबसे अधिक भूखे और बेघर लोग भी इसी मुल्क में रहते हैं।

यदि हम दुनिया के सबसे बड़े लोकतान्त्रिक देश होने का दावा करते हैं, तो हमारा प्रदर्शन भी उसके अनुरूप ही होना चाहिए। मगर अफ़सोस कि ऐसा नहीं है। आधुनिक लोकतंत्र के सबसे बड़े मानक, यानि कि मानव विकास सूचकांक में हमारा स्थान अभी भी दुनिया के औसत से नीचे है। हमारे संविधान में विचार और अभिव्यक्ति की स्वतंत्रता को मौलिक अधिकार भले ही माना गया है, लेकिन प्रेस की स्वतंत्रता में हमारा स्थान दुनिया के फिसड्डी देशों की कतार में आता है। महिलाओं के साथ भेदभाव और शिशु मृत्यु दर भी हमें शर्मिन्दा ही करती है। यदि हम सबसे अधिक युवाओं वाले देश हैं तो दूसरी तरफ सबसे अधिक बेरोजगारों की फ़ौज भी हमारे यहाँ ही है। लोकतंत्र को संचालित करने के लिए जिन संस्थाओं की सबसे अधिक दुहाई दी जाती है, आज के समय में उन सभी संस्थाओं की स्थिति डाँवाडोल ही नजर आती है। हम दावा तो विश्वगुरु बनने का करते हैं लेकिन दुनिया के प्रथम 100 शिक्षा संस्थानों में हमारा कहीं भी नाम नहीं है।

ऐसे में आजादी का अमृत वर्ष हमें एक बार फिर से अपने भीतर झाँकने का अवसर देता है कि आज से 75 वर्ष पूर्व हमने नियति से जो वादे किये थे, वे कहाँ तक पूरे हुए। साथ ही साथ दुनिया के स्तर पर लोकतंत्र और आधुनिक मूल्यों के मामले में हम कहाँ खड़े हैं। जाहिर है, हमारी शुरुआत हमारे सामाजिक ताने बाने से होनी चाहिए। हमें यह समझना चाहिए कि हमारे देश की विविधता ही हमारी ताकत है। इन विविधताओं को साथ लेकर चलने से ही हमारा लोकतंत्र मजबूत होता है। जहाँ हम अपने से भिन्न लोगों की बातों का भी सम्मान करते हैं, उनसे सीखते हैं और उनके साथ चलते हैं। इस मूलमंत्र को हमें इस अमृत वर्ष में जरूर ध्यान में रखना होगा। हमें समझना होगा कि कोई भी देश या समाज तभी प्रगति कर सकता है, जब उसके सभी नागरिकों के पास जीवन-यापन की मूलभूत सुविधाएँ उपलब्ध हों। हमारा गणतंत्र तभी आगे बढ़ सकेगा, जब देश के सभी नागरिक अपने आपको मुख्यधारा के साथ जुड़ा हुआ महसूस करेंगे।



देश की आजादी के समय अपने आपसे किये गये बहुत सारे वादे आज भी अधूरे ही रह गये हैं। हमने सोचा था कि यह देश सबको साथ लेकर आगे बढ़ेगा। लेकिन ऐसा नहीं हुआ।



Image courtesy: theamdedkarmovement.blogspot.com/

WORKING of THE CONSTITUTION and THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

Despite significant achievements, today we are facing number of challenges. If these challenges are not overcome, it is not possible to save our Constitution. It is the Constitution that has ensured equal protection and equal opportunity to all prohibiting discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, gender, language or place of birth. Therefore, we have to preserve both the Constitution and its aims for us to live safely, for ourselves and our future generation.



Justice (Retd) H.N. Nagamohan Das
Former Judge of Karnataka High Court

All Independent States are not Republics. But all Republics are Independent States. When an Independent State adopts a written Constitution then that State becomes Republic. India became Independent on 15th of August, 1947. By adopting world's largest written Constitution, India became Republic on 26th January, 1950. Therefore India is both Independent and Republic.

WHAT IS IN THE CONSTITUTION?

The Indian Constitution contains 22 Parts, 12 Schedules and 448 Articles. The Special feature of India's Constitution is its Preamble. This Preamble specifies that India is a Union of States, a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular and Democratic Republic with a Parliamentary System of Government. The Constitution establishes a federal structure and is unitary

in spirit. Constitution provides for three organs called the legislative, executive and judiciary, making them jointly responsible for securing social, economic and political justice to all citizens, liberty of thought, expression, belief and worship; equality of status and opportunity; and to promote among them fraternity, achieving the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation. The Constitution provides all citizens, individually and collectively, some basic freedoms such as right to equality before law, equal protection and equal opportunity in the matter of public employment. Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, right to freedom of speech and expression, assembly, association or union, movement, residence and right to practice any profession or occupation. Right

against exploitation, prohibiting all forms of forced labour, child labour and traffic in human beings; right to freedom of conscience and freedom to profess, practice and propagation of religion, right of citizens to conserve their culture, language and script.

By 42nd amendment to the Constitution we incorporated fundamental duties such as, to abide by the Constitution, to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom, to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so and promote harmony and spirit of brotherhood among Indians, to spread scientific temperament, transcending religious, linguistic and regional diversities.

The Constitution lays down that the State Government shall direct its policy in such a manner so as to secure for all men and women adequate means of livelihood and equal pay for equal work. It also lays down that within the limits of its economic capacity, the State should make effective provisions for securing the right to work, education and public assistance in the event of unemployment, old age, sickness and disability or other cases of undeserved want. The State shall also endeavour to secure for workers a living wage, human conditions of work, a decent standard of life etc.

The State's Policy should be directed for securing distribution of ownership and control of material resources of the community for common good of all citizens. It should not result in concentration of wealth and means of production to common detriment.

The other important directions are to provide opportunity and facilities for healthy development of children, free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14, promotion of educational and economic interests of schedule castes, schedule tribes, women and other weaker sections.

In the constitution certain basic features are included such as supremacy of the Constitution, sovereignty of the nation, Parliamentary Democracy, Welfare State, Secularism, Social Justice, etc.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Republic of India has made some achievements. Prior to Independence the entire land from Kashmir to Kanyakumari was never brought under one political rule. Either it was Gupta's India, Maurya's India, Mughal's India or British India. Even when we got Independence

there were nearly 600 Royal/feudal lords who were ruling different parts of India. We have abolished monarchy, feudalism and ended the colonialism and brought the entire land mass from Kashmir to Kanyakumari under one political rule, one boundary, one Constitution, one National Anthem, one National Flag and one National Symbol. Real India is founded only after the Constitution came into force.

Having abolished feudalism we have established independent democratic institutions such as the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha at the Centre, the Vidhana Sabha and Vidhana Parishath in the states, executive offices such as President of the Nation, the Central Government, the State Government, Zilla Panchayat, Taluk Panchayath, Grama Panchayath, Municipalities, Corporations, Judicial Institutions like the Supreme Court, High Courts, the District Courts and the Taluk Courts.

We brought institutional reforms such as land reforms, agricultural reforms, industrial reforms, educational reforms, health reforms etc.

The literacy rate which was barely 15 to 16% when we gained freedom in 1947 has now been improved to stand at 79%. Nearly 70% population were below poverty and now we have brought down to 21%. The average longevity of life which was at an average of 32 years is now bettered to approximately 69 years. The annual food production which was 50 million tons has increased to 295 million tons today. Basic amenities such as employment, shelter, health, drinking water, roads, electricity and transport have been provided. Poverty, hunger, famine, floods and contagious diseases have been controlled to a vast extent. India is one among the top ten countries in the world in the field of Space Technology, Information Technology, Atomic Energy, Service Sector etc.

There is some progress in the living conditions of women, backward classes, minorities, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. These sections have now entered the legislative, the executive and the judiciary. They have made good name in many fields such as Education, Science, Technology, Medicine, Law, Sports, Journalism, etc.

Though there are divergent religions, castes, languages, cultures, sub-cultures, customs, ideals, several political parties' divergent attitudes and political ideologies, we have progressed making effort to be all inclusive

in accordance with our constitution forming governments, holding elections from time to time peacefully changing the Governments.

CONTINUED PROBLEMS

Despite these achievements we still have a few who are illiterate, unemployed, homeless and destitute. It has not been possible to provide everybody with clean drinking water, health facility, roads to all villages, electricity etc. The nation is suffering under an agrarian and industrial crisis. I am not a pessimist, but an optimistic. If we work little more and unitedly by bringing certain changes in our policies; reforms in the governance and by using modern scientific achievements, we can resolve our problems in few years.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

But, today we are facing number of challenges. If these challenges are not defeated, it is not possible to save our Constitution. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the challenges before the Nation and the Constitution. Sometime back I wrote the important challenges such as Depoliticalisation, Terrorism, Communalism, Criminalisation, Corruption, Commercialisation and cultural degeneration. Even today these challenges are hunting in. Now we are facing new challenges and if we do not address these then the whole country will perish. They are:

ELECTIONS:

Today the elections held from the Panchayath to the Parliament have become the victims of ills such as religion, caste, money power and muscle power. Candidates with more money and declared criminal cases are winning with huge margins, while sincere and honest candidates are losing their deposits. Day by day the number of those with money power and criminal background winning elections is increasing remarkably. On the other hand, the number of educated, ethical, expert and worthy candidates is reducing. The corrupt with criminal cases, children of politicians, their relatives, businessmen, Real Estate dealers are joining into the election arena in increasing numbers. New Legislations tabled are being passed without any discussion. Intolerance, divisiveness, corruption, conflicts and disrespecting the views of opposition have become everyday happenings in the proceedings

of the House. In these institutions, shouting, heckling, chaos, protest etc., overpower any possible discussion of issues concerning the common man or the nation. Sometimes the entire session is lost without any discussion wasting the common man's tax money by hundreds of crores.

We need to remember the warning sounded by Dr.Ambedkar while presenting the Draft Constitution for acceptance "however good a Constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it happen to be a bad lot."

REPRESSION OF RIGHTS:

Today we are at the edge of losing the Rights that we enjoyed in the past 75 years. Governments are using the public media such as the Doordarshan and the Akashvaani in their control to act as their spokesmen. Through advertisements they are wielding their influence upon private media. The Government is misusing its absolute authority to ban books, cinemas, paintings, musical concerts, etc. It is arresting, sending to jails and killings in the encounters, the artists, social workers, students, writers, journalists etc. by misusing law of sedition, UAPA, Detention laws etc.; rolling bulldozers on the houses of those who participate in democratic protests. These developments have become a daunting challenge.

RULE OF LAW IN CRISIS

All the citizens and the institutions must obey the Constitution and the laws. No one is above the Constitution, as the saying goes 'King is not law, law is the King'.

Today in every city in the Country, Criminal Mafia is active. The mafias have fixed their rates openly as one fixes the prices for vegetables in the market. Some have made mafia their profession. In

Image Courtesy:
Gurpreet Artist
Bathinda, Face-
book



We need to remember the warning sounded by Dr.Ambedkar while presenting the Draft Constitution for acceptance "however good a Constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it happen to be a bad lot."

such a situation what place does Rule of law enjoy?

According to report of National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) every day there are twenty seven atrocities committed on untouchables. Everyday five houses of untouchables are burnt, three women are subjected to sexual assault and eleven persons are physically assaulted. Studies reveal that every week thirteen untouchables are being killed, and around a hundred types of atrocities are committed against untouchables. A number of these incidents go unreported. In most of the reported incidents, the culprits go unpunished.

According to the NCRB 2016 Report a woman succumbs to torture every 77 minutes, every six hours a women gets burnt alive, or beaten to death, or pushed to the intolerable circumstances of having to commit suicide; of every hundred married women twenty are subjected to assault by their husbands or the husband's family members, every 47 minutes a woman is sexually victimised. On average 96% women workers are subjected to sexual assault at least once in their lifetime. Day by day sexual attack on minor girlchildren, acid attacks, throwing hot oil and such other incidents are on the increase. Many incidents do not come to light.

Lock-up deaths due to torture in police stations are almost daily news. The NCRB has reported 118 93 97 and 93 lockup deaths in 2013 2014 2015 and 2016 respectively. The prisoners in jails too are dying due to torture and other causes. In such a situation where the fence raids the farm, law enforcement seems to have taken a holiday.

INDEPENDENCE OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS IN JEOPARDY

Certain developments in recent years have made a dent in the independence of the judiciary too. The Memorandum of Procedure with respect to the Appointment of Judges, Transfer and promotions are in abeyance because of conflict between the Central Government and the Supreme Court. The executive is making all efforts to gain upper hand over the judiciary. The Central Government has ignored all regulations in the matter of appointing judges and returning the names recommended by the collegium. Sometimes the appointment of judges is delayed without any justification. Bypassing the Supreme Court the Central Government is directly dealing with the High Courts. The

post retirement engagements are made on political considerations. Threats of transferring judges is yet another development threatening independence of judiciary.

By intruding into the affairs of autonomous institutions such as the Reserve Bank, CBI, Election Commission, Universities, Central Enforcement Cell, Censor Board of Films, etc., the government is damaging the autonomy of these institutions.

RISE OF COMMUNAL AND FUNDAMENTALIST FORCES:

In recent days, forces of fundamentalism and communalism have raised their heads in a critical way. These forces are disrupting the unity of people. They have erected walls between people, given rise to mistrust, suspicion, jealousy and violence. What is disturbing is that these forces have percolated to all areas; namely politics, administrations, education, police, cinema, sports, music, arts etc.

These forces are attempting to destroy our plural culture by dictating on almost all areas of our private lives such as what to eat, what to wear, what to talk, how to behave, whom to love, whom to marry, with whom to transact and how many children to give birth to.

Many religious heads are in election fray. The political power is being transferred to the hands of religious heads is a dangerous sign. These forces are posing a serious threat to secularism and pluralism. As a result, peace is disturbed in the country and progress is limping.

THE DISAPPEARING CONCEPT OF THE WELFARE STATE:

Welfare State means the Government shouldering more and more responsibility for providing the basic amenities to people such as food, education, health, shelter, employment, etc. But the Governments of the day are distancing from this constitutional obligation. The Governments are surrendering all fields like drinking water, education, health, housing, transport, employment etc., to private hands.

Today India is wealthier than ever before. But the question is, who is in control of this wealth? One percent population of our country are controlling 60% of wealth, 9% of population are controlling 20% of wealth and 90% of population are left with only 20% of wealth. This in-equal distribution of wealth resulted in huge suffering for vast sections from hunger, poverty, illiteracy, lack of medical facility, unemployment, insecurity etc.

GROWING IRRELEVANCE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE:

One of the greatest contributions of our constitution is the social justice policy. Social justice means a mechanism for realizing an egalitarian society; social justice means discrimination free development. It means delivering the benefits of development to those who have been deprived of these benefits so far. Reservation is only a small part of social justice. Reservation alone is not social justice.

It is reported that more than 60 lakh sanctioned posts are vacant in Union and State Government Services and Public Sector Units. Reducing the scope of Public Sector has become a policy of the Governments. The policy of disinvestment now called on monetisation followed by the successive Governments has resulted in reduction in the creation of employment and in some instances they are not just available. As a part of disinvestment policy, many number of public sector undertakings have been transferred to private corporate houses. Consequently social justice is becoming irrelevant.

Another development which has become hurdle for the value of social justice is contract labour system and out-sourcing. Under these labour hiring systems, reservations need not be followed.

THREAT TO FEDERAL SYSTEM:

The Supreme Court in Keshavananda Bharthi case held that Federal System is one of the basic structures of our Constitution. The court further specified that this basic structure is unamendable. Today the Federal System is facing serious challenges. In the name of one nation one tax, GST is brought into force. The economic power is now concentrated in the center. The State Governments are now reduced to the status of Municipalities. The State Governments are now made to stand before the center with a begging bowl. The political power is now concentrated with the center. Elected representatives defecting to other political parties and tendering resignations has become the order of the day. Majority governments are reduced to minority and minority political parties gaining majority through defections and resignations is seen in many number of States in the country.

The Union Government is encroaching on the jurisdiction of State Governments. The farm laws, amendment to APMC Act, Education and Electricity are some of the examples. Ignoring

and bypassing the State Government, the Union Government is directly instructing the State Government Officers is yet another threat to Federalism.

Some of the Governors are behaving like agents of Union Government. This is evident from the recent developments in the States like Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal etc. The confrontation between States and Governors is posing a threat to Federal structure.

In the name of Nationality the Diversity of the Country is threatened. One nation one tax, one market, one language, one grid, one religion are some of slogans voiced by communal forces is yet another threat to Federalism. If we do not address these challenges the unity and integrity of the nation will suffer.

CONCLUSION

It is the Constitution of India that is driving people with diverse faiths, castes, cultures, languages, beliefs, attitudes, customs, ideologies, food habits together. It is the constitution that has sown and cultivating ideologies called Democracy, Secularism and Social Justice. It is the Constitution that has guaranteed the Human Rights and Fundamental Rights.

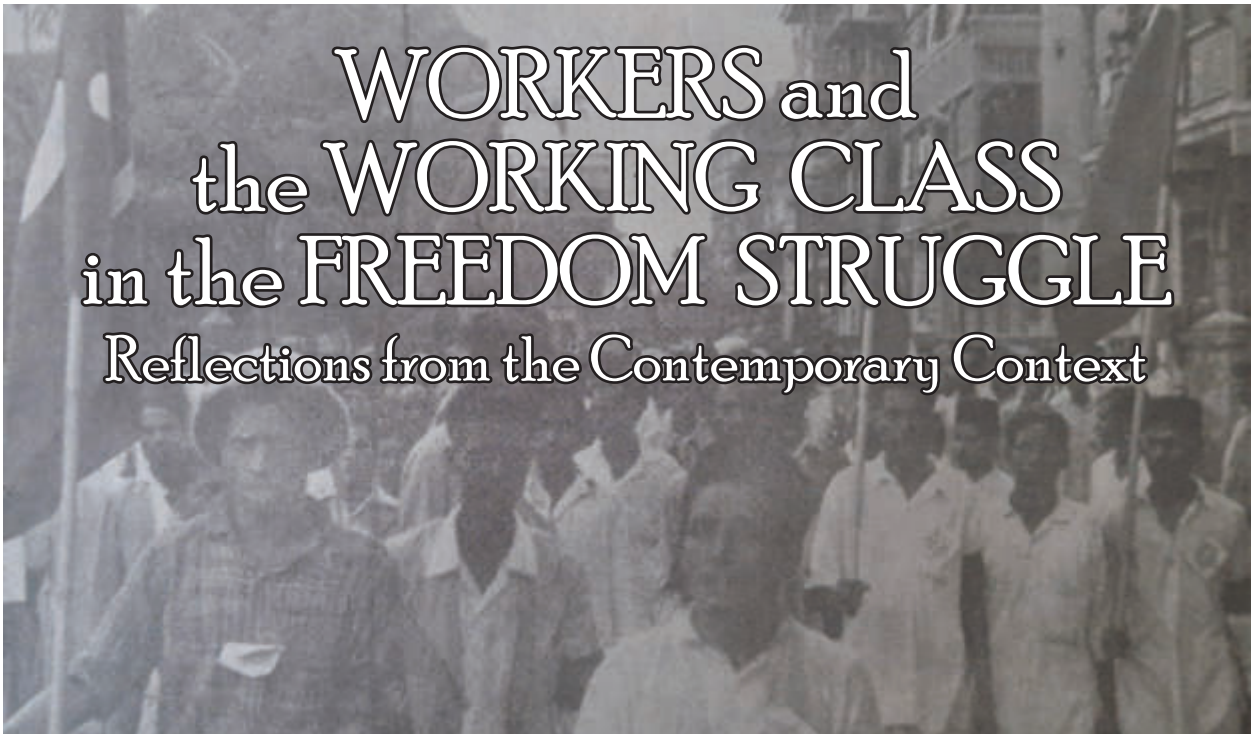
It is the Constitution that has ensured equal protection and equal opportunity to all prohibiting discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, gender, language or place of birth. Therefore, we have to preserve both the Constitution and its aims for us to live safely, for ourselves and our future generation. □



Image courtesy: vikalpsangam.org

WORKERS and the WORKING CLASS in the FREEDOM STRUGGLE

Reflections from the Contemporary Context



The history of the workers' movement in India, records the struggle and conscious engagement of vast masses of people in India came together, building solidarity across regions and religions to change their lives. One of the main features of the freedom struggle was to counter divisive trends and retrogressive social practices, whereas today many who wear the mantle of 'nationalism' seek to reinforce structures which uphold inequality in the name of 'tradition.' These undermine the gains of the anti-imperialist anti feudal struggle, reducing it a narrow fight against 'foreign rule,' devoid of the essence and spirit of the anti-imperialist anti feudal struggle.



Indu Agnihotri

Professor , Centre for Women's Development Studies, JNU

The struggle against imperialism represents a crucial phase in the history of India and, more specifically, its emergence as a modern nation. Popularly referred to as the freedom struggle it had very specific components in terms of its objectives. While at one level it represented opposition to 'foreign/ British rule,' its essence lay in opposition to imperialism which imposed a specific set of policies on its colony in India, with support from their allies in India, the feudal classes.

The Background

To understand the intensely political nature of the anti-imperialist anti -feudal struggle there is a need to reiterate the crisis generated in Indian society by imperialist policies. To begin with, this involved the adoption of

policies aimed at increasing the cultivation of commercial crops required by Britain, which made the peasantry in India more dependent on the market and its price fluctuations. To do this the colonial rulers garnered from its Indian lackeys—the feudal classes, with the Princely States and the landowning classes succumbing to their pressure. With the exception of a few, such as Tipu Sultan and Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the rest mostly acquiesced to bolstering imperialism so long as their privileges were left intact after an initial resistance. The revenue demands of the British regime and the exaction of high rents by the landlords wreaked havoc on the Indian peasantry, leading to the revolt of 1857— popularly seen as the First War of Independence. The years after the Revolt saw the

advent of modern industry. However, the nature of industrial development in British India, including its spatial spread, broadly followed a pattern which prioritized the industrial needs of the Empire. This was a situation vastly different from the context in which industrialization had proceeded in Britain and in other European countries. It was marked by a concentration of capital and business in the hands of the Europeans and was accompanied by the adoption of policies which ensured huge profits to them, apart from the mechanism of the 'Drain' evolved to finance the extractive process in favour of the imperial power.

The Context of Industrialization

The growth of modern industry in India, in selective ways to suit the needs of the Empire, has to be seen in this context. The formation of enclaves of indigenous capitalism were, to start with, permitted only in segments which were not directly in competition with British industry, or in the backdrop of the two World Wars, when British industry could not fulfil the imperial needs. Historians of Modern India have analyzed both the financial foundations of the British Raj, as well as the policies of selective industrialization. With this a small group of Indian industrialists emerged, who sought to take advantage of the concessions given by the British regime as part of war measures. They sought to put pressure on the colonial government to concede to its demands, including through the platform of the Indian National Congress, whose leaders saw support for the nascent Indian industrialist class as an expression of nationalism. Historians have documented how the Indian economy was 'underdeveloped' to suit colonial needs due to political subjugation and the circumstances in which Indian industry came up later as also how the industrialists organized themselves to represent their interests. Comparatively speaking, histories of the working class and their struggles are fewer. This gap needs to be addressed by the trade union movement, especially if the lies perpetrated by those who seek to counter the role of the working class are to be exposed.¹

With the colonial state intervening at every stage to uphold its interests, both industrialization and the absorption of dispossessed rural poor in India did not happen through natural processes as was the case elsewhere. While inequality is an integral feature of class society, the levels of poverty, famine,

hunger and devastation that British India saw were unprecedented. It is in this background that the modern working class in India emerged, drawn from the rural poor and those facing ruination due to the destruction of the artisanal industries. This explains why workers, together with the peasantry in India, represented a significant component of the masses who struggled for independence and for the formation of the Indian nation state. They struggled to realize the aspirations and dreams of the people of India for a life with dignity, justice and equal citizenship, irrespective of class, caste, gender, ethnicity, region or religion. While there are earlier histories of work and of resistance to injustice, the colonial context welded these struggling people into a force which stood for national independence, against imperial rule, to also put an end to feudal exploitation.

Some of the earliest industries developed were the railways, the printing presses, the jute and textile mills. By the end of the 19th century a sizeable workforce had developed in the cotton/textile and jute mills, apart from the railways; dockworkers; Municipal and Postal workers. Calcutta, Madras, Kanpur; Sholapur, Bombay and Ahmedabad emerged as major centres — the last two seeing a visible concentration of Indian-owned industry- while the rest, including the plantations, remained British dominated. This is important since during the freedom struggle, the emerging Indian capitalist class, sought to influence the 'nationalist' agenda from their standpoint. Also, that confronted with workers' struggles, the British were willing to usher in some 'regulations' for workers, which aimed to curb the functioning of the Indian capitalists.

Issues, organizing and struggles

The emergence of struggles for workers' rights is linked to this history. While the conditions of indentured labour taken to the plantations is well-known, the evidence that came before the Factory Commissions and Enquiry Committees testified to the miserable conditions of work, wagecuts and disparity, wage contracts; bonus; child work, accompanied by the lack of security. The Royal Commission on Labour estimated that in most industrial centres the proportion of families/ individuals in debt was not less than 2/3 of the whole, with debt generally exceeding three months' wages. In Madras 90% and in Nagpur, above 80% workers/families were in debt. The struggles focused on the right to form organisations, conditions of work, long working hours, low wages, standardization of wages,

rationalization, retrenchment, housing and the lack of security of jobs, which resulted in a continuous flow of migrants and continued links with the 'village.'

While strikes and struggles took place earlier too, the presence of labour began to register itself significantly in the early 20th century. From 1905 onwards, there were reports of strikes in different parts of the country, with the railway workers and the printers' strikes being some of the earliest. Narayan Meghaji Lokhande from Pune founded the Millhands' Association. He had earlier joined the Satyashodhak movement of Mahatma Phule, devoting himself fully to social service and the Mumbai Kamgar Sangh, with Phule also addressing textile workers in Bombay. The demands included a weekly holiday for workers on Sunday; a half-hour recess; that the mills work from 6:30 a.m. and close by sunset and workers be given their salaries by the 15th of each month.

In 1899, one of the earliest strikes in the **Indian Peninsula Railways, drew support from Tilak**. The Swadeshi movement in Bengal, in opposition to the partition of Bengal, saw early signs of political consciousness among workers, going beyond sporadic action around specific grievances. A number of unions came up, though these are seen as representing strike Committees.

The years 1918-21, around the time of World War I, saw several strikes and collective action by labour and also the emergence of the first trade unions. The Madras Labour Union was formed in 1918. Similar developments took place in other industrial centres. These led to the setting up of the All India Trade Union Congress in 1920, with Lala Lajpat Rai as its President. The workers being drawn primarily from the railways, seamen, post and telegraph workers; the textile/ cotton mills in Madras, Ahmedabad, Bombay, and Kanpur; jute mills in Calcutta; Kharagpur; Jamshedpur, where the iron and steel industry was located and Municipal workers. The major centres for the Railways remained active sites of trade union activity through most of these years. In later years bidi and coir workers as well as other sectors joined the struggles.

The decade of the 1920s was critical for the working class movement, though the existence and activities of the unions continued to be seen with a lens of illegality, till the passage of the Indian Trade Union Act in 1926, when unions got some legal protection. While the number

of strikes showed a decline, the work days lost continued to go up and the B&C Mills in Madras saw intense action in 1921. The late 1920s saw an upsurge with textile mills and the railways emerging as hotspots. The textile workers' strike in 1925 in fact led to the suspension of the cotton excise duty, a significant achievement. It has been observed that 'the Bombay proletariat had won for the country a central nationalist demand of 30 years standing... though this achievement of theirs has seldom been acknowledged.'² The years 1928-29 were a hectic period, with a six-month long strike by workers in the Bombay mills in 1928. The 1920s also marked the advent of the left in trade unions in this period.

The history of working class in the struggle for independence is rich and vast. It cannot be captured in a short piece. There were many flashpoints, and instances of heroism, especially in the background of growing nationalist sentiment. These included Calcutta jute mill and transport workers; an upsurge in Peshawar when Badshah Khan was arrested; the refusal to offload foreign goods by dock workers in Bombay and Karachi and much more. Topping these was the Sholapur uprising in 1931 which saw the setting up of the Commune forcing the British to impose martial law and the martyrdom of Mallappa Dhanshetty, Shrikisan Sharda, Qurban Husain, and Jagannath Shinde, all hanged to death. In the 1930s, marked by the General strike of 1938, Lal Kanpur emerged as a major challenge. The Mutiny in the Royal Indian Navy in 1946 marked another historic moment, when the city of Bombay saw huge unrest and turmoil, especially in the working class areas, including firing and deaths of workers.

The Response of the Colonial Regime

Brutal repression by the colonial state was accompanied by what the government projected as 'regulatory mechanisms,' which often served the contrary purpose. These included the three Factories Acts, 1881, 1891 and 1911, and the setting up of an official machinery for inspection etc. The Assam Labour Enquiry of 1922 highlighted the excesses linked to recruitment procedures

While inequality is an integral feature of class society, the levels of poverty, famine, hunger and devastation that British India saw were unprecedented. It is in this background that the modern working class in India emerged, drawn from the rural poor and those facing ruination

and that there had been no wage increase for a quarter of a century! The detailed report of the Royal Commission on Labour (Whitley Commission, 1931) leading to the Factories Act of 1934. A Cawnpore Labour Enquiry Committee was setup in 1937. A comprehensive Labour Investigation Committee in 1947 was followed by the Factories Act of 1948 and the Rege Committee recommendations. Official machinery aside, there were a series of Acts pertaining to specific industries: cotton, mines and plantations; the Workmen's Compensation Act; the Maternity Benefit Act Bombay 1929, followed by other states; the **Public Safety Ordinance of 1929 and the Trade Disputes Act of 1929 and the Payment of Wages Act, 1936;** and, The Bombay Industrial Disputes Act, 1938 which sought to eliminate all strikes and lockouts. Undoubtedly, restrictive measures and the penal provisions were taken up with enthusiasm by the colonial regime, while the regulatory provisions were implemented with uneven effect, with no thought being given to their enforcement and some not being adopted by certain provinces. This was also the case with several of the ILO Conventions after World War I, which raised issues of women and child labour, night work, underground work in the mines and unemployment, in the aftermath of the depression.

Meanwhile, a pattern seemed to emerge where moments of hectic political activity were marked by significant struggles by the working class. Starting with the Swadeshi movement in the early 1900s, the workers joined in the political hartal in Mumbai against Tilak's conviction. The war years, the Khilafat agitation, the Rowlatt Satyagraha and the Gandhi led Non Co-operation Movement, the protests against the Simon Commission, the Civil Disobedience, the Quit India movement in 1942 and the RIN mutiny in 1946, all saw workers take to the streets to confront the imperialist forces.

Apart from the British authorities, responses to workers' struggles came from different standpoints. From the decade of the 1930s it became clear that the ideological understanding

due to the destruction of the artisanal industries. This explains why workers, together with the peasantry in India, represented a significant component of the masses who struggled for independence and for the formation of the Indian nation state.

which shaped the movements was as important as the struggles themselves. While more workers came into unions, there was clearly at least one alternate model of TU organisation, including one put forward by Gandhi himself. The Majoor Mahajan Sabha, as represented by the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association (ATLA) definitely stood apart/ aloof from the mainstream TUs. Differences existed at the level of ideas, understanding and political standpoints. Alongside events in India, the Soviet Socialist Revolution in 1917 and the emergence of the Left in India marked a high point, opening up new possibilities, raising the hopes, spirit and consciousness of workers' movements. The influence of socialist ideology was seen not only among the Communists but, for a while, even in sections of the Congress leadership, the most visible being the Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru apart from leaders at the regional level.³ By the 1920s the trade union movement had developed across sectors and regions. While TU membership amongst women remained low, several women leaders emerged during this period. The significant presence of the Communists in the trade union leadership was also clearly visible.

These developments evoked particularly ruthless responses from the colonial rulers, who promptly initiated a series of Conspiracy Cases (Meerut, 1929) against the emerging left leadership, while also imposing a ban on the CPI. Meanwhile, disparate voices began to emerge within the Congress, especially when it was in power in the 1930s in the Provinces. Tensions came to the fore due to this and ideological differences with regard to the German aggression under Hitler and the Second World War.

This period also marked a critical point with a visible growth of the communal tide. Communal riots were by now known to be a strategy in the arsenal of the ruling classes. While this was most visible in the aftermath of Bhagat Singh's martyrdom, not surprisingly this was used as a strategy to break strikes, as documented by labour historians.⁴ In the political sphere, while the Muslim League's putting forth the need for reservations for Muslims and subsequently the demand for partition are common knowledge, the tactics of those who championed 'Hindu nationalism,' while choosing to stay aloof from the anti-imperialist struggle to push a narrow sectarian agenda for a Hindu Rashtra also

emerged as a clear strategy to break workers' unity in this phase.

Reflecting on this period it is clear that the different currents underlying these political movements posed critical challenges before the working class movement. It is remarkable that the workers were not swayed by these sectarian, communal agendas and pursued their class issues on the basis of a broader understanding, focusing on their demands and opposition to imperialism. While many leaders emerged in the movement, it should be noted that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who prior to his role and responsibility in the Constituent Assembly, emerged as the leader of the Depressed Classes, opposed the introduction of the Industrial Disputes Bill, in 1937 because it sought to take away the workers' right to strike. Ambedkar was the Labour Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council in 1942. His interventions on abolition of the *khoti* system in Konkan/ agriculture and on untouchability were significant, especially in view of the linkages between caste and labour. Dakshayani Velayudhan, the only Dalit woman member of the Constituent Assembly, raised the issue of agrestic slavery and economic bondage.

There was a clear impact of socialist ideals/ ideology, especially after the Russian Revolution, seen as a victory for workers across the world. As the red flag came to symbolize the fight against tyranny and misrule, the aspiration for freedom from exploitation was reflected in a proliferation of pamphlets, publications and poems by workers invoking the red flag, the hammer and the sickle. This was reflected in the mood in urban industrial centres. The workers' movement forged solidarity across regions, caste, religion, language and gender, while also developing links with international labour movements and organisations. The influence of Communist ideology was clearly seen in the movement as the language of socialism was

widely embraced. This was also reflected in the debates in the Constituent Assembly. Thus the active participation of the working class in the anti-imperialist struggle gave a new meaning to the idea of freedom.

In Independent India: New Challenges and the Changed Context of 'Nationalism'

The imposition of the Emergency in the mid-1970s, the debt crisis and the loans negotiated with the IMF were a symptom of a deepening crisis. These signaled a clear assertion of state power in favour of industry in independent India and infliction of ruthless repression on the working class. The nature of capitalist growth has, since, seen remarkable changes. The advent of a new trade regime imposed by international funding agencies such as the IMF and the World Bank under the GATT and WTO have changed the context of industrial production and production relations. Industry has been transformed, as also the forms of unions/ unionization.

The context of work and workers' struggles has changed vastly. With the collapse of some of the erstwhile Socialist states, international capital has seen an opportunity to launch the strategy of liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG), launching relentless attacks on the working people of India. The expansion of the unorganized sector and a planned strategy of informalization of the economy are effectively aimed at denying existing rights to workers, many of whom are even denied formal recognition as workers. This phase poses fresh challenges of reaching out to an increasingly contractual, dispersed working class, often operating from outsourced sites of production. At a time when new categories of workers and sites of work are emerging, when the definition of work and place of work is changing, organising workers and waging struggles poses multiple challenges. Vast segments of work and sections of workers are not even recognized as workers. This is especially the case in those sectors/ spheres where women were concentrated. The recent Labour Codes are a case in point, whereby the state seems to implement a strategy of dismantling all existing labour laws which ensured some rights to the workers won over



As at the time of the freedom struggle, the actions of the working class in India remain critical to the present political context.

a century of struggle in India. This phase is signified by the complicity of institutions of the state against the working class.

As at the time of the freedom struggle, the actions of the working class in India remain critical to the present political context. This enjoins a special responsibility on those engaged in organizing the working classes/ masses to ensure that the forces they represent consciously intervene to preserve and strengthen democracy while remaining committed to united struggles. Their success in this struggle rests on their keeping alive the rich history of their struggle which began with the working class unitedly standing up to take on the might of the British Empire. As 'nationalism' acquires new meanings in present times, workers and the unions need to refresh debates from earlier times, to ensure that the history and tradition of diversity is kept alive and the language of nation and nationalism are not allowed to become tools to divide the working class, or the people in general. In present globalized times there is a need to think how the critique of imperialism and the idea of working class unity are to be taken to newer sections of the working class, to also bridge gaps on the basis of caste and identity.

There is an urgent need to understand how the changed nature, forms and locations of work in this globalized world impact forms of consciousness, especially as these are shaped by parallel processes, imbibing a heady mix of culture, politics, religion and the law? Forging unity to develop a trade union consciousness, challenging by itself, needs to tackle the changed context of politics. There are many complex challenges to the efforts to build unity, especially as the global seems to merge with the national and the local, forging links to facilitate exploitation in ways which are truly baffling. The pandemic made this challenge visible as worker-migrants walked on never-ending tracks which led to their nowhere homes,

The history of the workers' movement in India, records the struggle and conscious engagement of vast masses of people in India came together, building solidarity across regions and religions to change their lives. One of the main features of the freedom struggle was to counter divisive trends and retrogressive social practices, whereas today many who wear the mantle of 'nationalism' seek to reinforce structures which uphold inequality in the name of 'tradition.' These undermine the gains of the anti-imperialist anti feudal struggle, reducing

it a narrow fight against 'foreign rule,' devoid of the essence and spirit of the anti-imperialist anti feudal struggle. Development of a progressive outlook includes challenging irrational beliefs and practices in what is seen as the home or the private sphere in our lives. As B.T. Ranadive said, the worker is often the feudal master at home. In this sphere reside many elements which are in fact inimical to working class ideology: caste consciousness, patriarchal elements and beliefs which prompt us to discriminate on account of sex and gender; false notions of 'honour,' superstition and irrational beliefs which form part of our consciousness, prompting us to adhere to practices which uphold inequalities, even as we seek to assert equality in public life. Confronting ideologies which uphold such beliefs and discriminatory practices is as much a part of trade union work as the task of organizing workers across social groups. It involves understanding the changing role of the state, identification of gaps and tensions on account of the different social location of workers. At the present juncture it is necessary to confront retrogressive trends within the movement and forms of consciousness which seek to draw people towards fundamentalism and obscurantism and ideologies which are opposed to unity in struggle.

The Idea of India, as envisioned during the freedom struggle, rested on principles of equality, liberty and democracy which embrace diversity in different fields and spheres. Today fundamentalisms of different hues seek to smash this vision, introduce a concept of differential, graded citizenship even as the nation and nationalism are being re-defined by those who disagreed with the basic values of modernity and secularism which were the core ideals upheld by those who struggled to build a new India

(Footnotes)

1. A notable exception being *Sukomal Sen's Working Class in India: History of Emergence and Movement 1830-1970*, K.P. Bagchi & Co., Calcutta, 1977. TU publications usually focus on specific struggles. The AITUC recently brought out a short booklet to mark 100 years of its existence.
2. See S. Bhattacharya, *Jawaharlal Nehru and the Indian Working Class: A Historical Review*, *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol - L No. 16, April 18, 2015.
3. See *Chitra Joshi, Lost Worlds Indian Labour and its Forgotten Histories*, Permanent Black, Delhi, 2003.

AIIEA Delegation Meets LIC Management

A delegation of AIIEA consisting of Com. V. Ramesh, President; Com. Shreekant Mishra, General Secretary and Com. H. I. Bhatt, Joint Secretary met the LIC management on 12th of July 2022. In the morning session, the delegation had an extensive discussion with Sri R. K. Dubey, Executive Director (Personnel) in the presence of other officials of Personnel department. The following issues came up for discussion in the meeting.

Inordinate delay in the Notification of Board Approved Family Pension: The AIIEA delegation expressed its serious unhappiness over the inordinate delay in notification of the LIC Board approved improvements in the family pension. The delegation pointed out that many employees/ retired employees have passed away in the last two years leaving their families in dire financial distress. The delay in notification of LIC Board's recommended improvements in the family pension is therefore unfair. The delegation demanded that LIC should expeditiously take up the issue with the Ministry for early resolution of the issue. The management assured to follow up the issue with all seriousness.

Inordinate delay in giving One more Option to some leftover Ex-Servicemen Employees to join the 1995 Pension Scheme: The delegation also expressed its unhappiness over the inordinate delay in giving One more Option to some leftover Ex-Servicemen Employees to join the 1995 Pension Scheme. The management responded by saying that the issue is being repeatedly followed up with the government and all the clarifications sought by the Ministry have been sent. The AIIEA shall continue its efforts to see that the issue is resolved at the earliest.

Fixation of Pay of Ex-Servicemen Employees re-employed in LIC on or after 01.01.2006: The AIIEA delegation raised the issue of unjust and arbitrary fixation of pay of Ex-servicemen employees re-employed in LIC on or after 01.01.2006. Our delegation pointed out that this had not only caused huge reduction in salary of such employees, but it is also resulting into recovery of huge amounts of money from these employees for absolutely no fault of theirs. We demanded that the management should take up the issue with the government afresh for a favourable resolution of the issue. The management appreciated our concern and assured to take up the issue afresh

for resolution of this matter. The AIIEA shall continue its efforts to give relief to the affected Ex-Servicemen employees.

Restoration of the Increments postponed due to participation in the two-day strike action on 28-29 March 2022: The delegation of AIIEA demanded immediate restoration of the increments postponed for participation in 28-29 March 2022 strike.

Arbitrary Withdrawal of ACLs: The AIIEA delegation expressed its strong disapproval of the arbitrary manner in which ACLs were withdrawn through an erroneous interpretation of Government Notifications. The delegation drew the attention of the management to AIIEA's letters dated 18.11.2021, 16.12.2021 and 22.05.2022 on the issue and demanded that immediate remedial measures should be taken to rectify the anomalies.

Treatment of Intervening Holidays during the period of Casual Leave: The delegation of AIIEA reiterated its strong objection to the practice of treating intervening holidays between two periods of casual leave as Leaves rather than as holidays. Pointing out that a large number of analogous institutions have done away with this practice, the delegation demanded that there was a need to have a re-look at the issue. The LIC management responded positively to this and said that the issue is under their active consideration.

Ex-Gratia in lieu of Bonus for the Years 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22: The AIIEA delegation was critical of the inordinate delay in getting sanctions from the government on the question of Ex-Gratia in lieu of Bonus for the aforementioned years. The management responded that they have already taken up the issue afresh with the government and were hopeful of an early resolution of the long pending issue.

Conveyance Allowance for Physically Challenged (Divyaang) Employees: Our delegation took strong exception to the fact that the conveyance allowance for physically challenged employees has not been revised upwards for over a decade. Pointing out that the issue cannot brook any further delay, we demanded early resolution of the issue. The management informed that this issue has already been broached with the government and they would follow it up further.

Transfer Cases of Newly Recruited Assistants: The AIIEA delegation expressed its unhappiness that Assistants recruited in the year 2020 were not being given transfer to their desired places in cases of acute need also. While appreciating that this was a part of the Recruitment Notification itself, the delegation reasoned that this should not be mechanically implemented especially on Marriage Grounds and Medical Grounds. The management appreciated our concern and has asked some time to examine the issue in greater detail. The AIIEA shall continue to pursue this issue.

Recruitment in Class III & IV Cadres: The AIIEA expressed its satisfaction that the Recruitment process which had got stuck up in Tamil Nadu because of some court cases was finally heading towards a resolution. However, in spite of the recruitment in 2020 and the movement of contingency panels in two rounds, there are still some left over vacancies out of the total declared vacancies of 8000 because of various reasons. The delegation of AIIEA demanded that the management should immediately start the process of recruitment against these vacancies so that it benefits the institution and the society at large.

The delegation drew the attention of the management to a settled principle of law that one temporary employee should not be replaced by another temporary employee. It was pointed out that there were flagrant violations of this principle in LIC and many offices were trying to push outsourcing of Class IV jobs. Our delegation conveyed its firm opposition to this move and said that Recruitment to Class IV cadre was the only solution to take care of Class

IV jobs. This issue has to be followed up further.

Reimbursement of the Cost of Furniture/ Mobile Handset: The AIIEA delegation reiterated our demand for reimbursement of the cost of mobile handset and furniture. This issue needs to be pursued still further.

Recognition to AIIEA: The AIIEA delegation was critical that LIC management was not taking up the issue of Recognition to AIIEA despite our reasoned arguments over several rounds of discussions.

All these issues apart, the AIIEA delegation also took up some issues pertaining to CGIT, disciplinary matters and issues of particular relevance to some zones. The developments relating to these issues will be communicated to the respective zones.

AIIEA Delegation Meets the Managing Director:

A delegation of AIIEA consisting of Com. Shreekant Mishra and Com. H.I. Bhatt met Sri B.C. Pattnaik, Managing Director of LIC in the evening. Our delegation took up the issue of the inordinate delay in notification of the Board recommended improvements in family pension and requested the MD for his personal intervention so that the issue was resolved without any further loss of time. The MD was positive in his response and assured to pursue the issue. The discussion with the MD covered a wide range of issues including the possibilities and challenges before the LIC in the emerging situation.

The AIIEA shall continue to follow up the issues cited above and inform the units accordingly.

26th General Conference of AIIEA Formation of Reception Committee

On 25th June 2022, a meeting for the formation of Reception Committee for the ensuing 26th General Conference of All India Insurance Employees' Association (AIIEA) to be held in January, 8-11, 2023 in Kolkata was held at Subarna Banik Samaj Hall, Ganesh Chandra Avenue, Kolkata in the afternoon. Comrade Ramkrishna Datta, Vice-president, Eastern Zone Insurance Employees' Association (EZIEA) presided over the meeting. Prof. (Dr) Ratan Khasnabis was present as the Chief Guest of the meeting. In the welcome session Comrade Surajit Das, General Secretary of EZGIEA offered flower

bouquet to Prof. Khasnabis. The representatives from fraternal trade unions and unions within the insurance industry were also present in the meeting. After a brief introduction from the President, Comrade Jayanta Mukherjee, General Secretary, EZIEA explained the present situation of the nationalised Insurance Industry (both LIC and GIC) in India and proposed the name of the members and advisors of the Reception Committee. Comrade Pradip Gargari, Joint Secretary, EZIEA seconded the proposal. It was unanimously accepted by the house. Prof. (Dr) Ratan Khasnabis, an eminent economist and



and assured their wholehearted support to the success of ensuing Conference.

Comrade Jayanta Mukherjee, General Secretary, EZIEA and Comrade Sanjay Jha, Secretary, Standing

academician was elected as the Chairman of the Reception Committee. Then the newly elected Chairman of the Reception Committee delivered his speech expressing his enthusiasm to hold this prestigious post. In his speech he explained the ill-conceived move of Modi Government on the issue of privatisation and liberalisation of nationalised Insurance Industry in this neo-liberal era. Prof. Khasnabis emphasised the need of movement of the Trade Unions along with the common people to resist the anti-people move of the Government. 4 the representatives of Central and State level Trade Unions and unions within the industry also took part in the discussion of the anti-people move of the Government

Committee (General Insurance) were elected as Joint Convenors and Comrade Amitava Ghosh, Treasurer, EZIEA was elected as Treasurer of Reception Committee.

Comrade Amitesh Sarkar, Assistant Secretary, EZIEA moved a resolution on the opening and operation of a Savings Bank account in the name of Reception Committee which was seconded by Comrade Tapan Mitra, Secretary, WBSGIEA. While concluding Comrade Ramkrishna Datta, President of the meeting, extended thanks to all. The hall was full of insurance employees both from LIC and GIC throughout the meeting. The programme was a grand success. □

One day strike on 15th July, 2022 in PSGI Companies a historic success AIIEA congratulates the employees for their display of unity and resolve

The one day strike called by the JFTU on 15th July, 2022 was a tremendous success in all PSGI Companies across the country. It was called on the demand of immediate settlement of long pending wage revision and other economic issues as well as protection of PSGI industry.

As usual, the offices of all PSGICs remained closed in the eastern part. However, the presence of large number of striking employees before their respective offices was quite remarkable. The NIC HO remained completely shut today. Braving rain, the activists of constituents of JFTU were picketing since morning before the HO and appealing everyone to not enter the office. At around 11 am, the employees gathered before the NIC HO held a meeting and listened patiently to the deliberations of JFTU leaders.

The striking employees in other parts of the country gave this strike a new dimension

by keeping offices closed in their areas also. While majority of offices remained shut in South Zone, they were closed in several parts of Northern and Western Zone too. At UII HO, only three GMs were present while there was scant presence of some officials in OIC HO. Even at Mumbai, New India offices were thinly attended. Strike rallies were held before UII and OIC HOs. These apart, demonstrations and gate meetings with large gathering of employees were held at almost all centres all over the country.

AIIEA congratulates each and every employee of PSGI Companies for their efforts for making this strike a grand success. The employees even defied the direct and indirect threat of the Management and DFS and participated in the strike. This is noteworthy and gives us confidence that come what may, we shall win our wage revision as per our aspirations and protect our industry. □

With Best Compliments



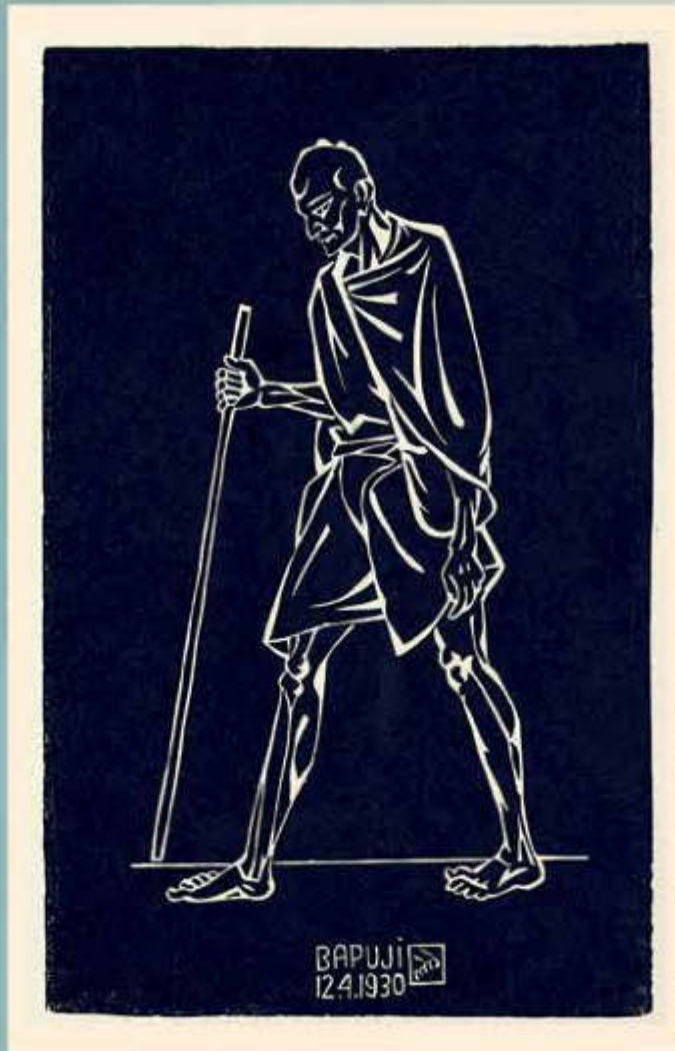
Shri K.VIJAYARAGHAVAN, M.Sc

Senior Business Associate,

LIC of India,

BHAVANI

Ph.No. 9842765598



Dandi March by Nandalal Bose

The service of India means, the service of the millions who suffer.
It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and
poverty and disease and inequality of opportunity.
The ambition of the greatest men of our generation has been
to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us,
but as long as there are tears and suffering,
so long our work will not be over.

-Jawaharlal Nehru
14th August 1947